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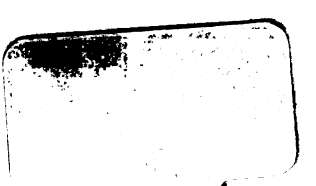
Mrs. MARDEN'S ORDEAL

JAMES HAY, Jr.

KD11976



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MRS. MARDEN'S ORDEAL

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He dragged the heavy hangings to the floor, disclosing Palmer.
FRONTISPIECE. *See page 100.*

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MRS. MARBURY'S ORDEAL

BY

JAMES MAY, JR

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
ARTHUR E. BECHER

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1918

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MRS. MARDEN'S ORDEAL

BY

JAMES HAY, JR.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
ARMAND BOTH

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1918

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To B.

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MRS. MARDEN'S ORDEAL

CHAPTER I

ACCORDING to ordinary standards, I should consider Charlie Corcoran's tragedy greater than mine—particularly as I am almost as big a figure in his as in my own. But I can not. There are times when the ordinary standards are worth no more than the words in which they are framed. They neither define justice nor afford consolation. And now I can not be bound by the mockery of trite conventions and accepted rules. I must do, not what people would have me do, but what I want to do.

When all is said and done, do we not, under the hot urge of the things that make life worth while, do always what we want to do?

I am utterly unable to make myself say that I am as sorry for Charlie as I am for myself. It does not matter to me at all, in the last analysis, that his, like mine, is a love tragedy. I am a woman—and what woman can be so

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grieved by the ruin of another's love life as by the desolation of her own? My heart cries out for comforting, my soul is so burdened that I must have help. That is why Charlie's grief is, to me, like a thing distant and shadowy.

If I can help him, that is well and good. But the thing I desire—desire with a very anguish of longing—is my own peace of mind.

That is why I have made today a promise which, when I consider it, frightens me. I have agreed to bare my soul to the scrutiny of another, and that other is a man. There is to be neither mental reservation nor deception nor half-truth in what I am to say to him. When I have told him of my actions, I shall have merely begun my confidences to him, for; after the actions, will come the description of my motives. And, when one tells the naked truth about why one does things, one unveils those desires and incentives and longings which are the very structure of one's soul.

Would any other woman have the courage to do this? My determination to undertake it is the result of a long agony. Only agony can drive one to such exposure of one's real self.

It seems to matter very little that Doctor

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Doyle, the man to whom I am going in my unspeakable need, is an old friend of mine, was a friend of my father and mother. In a way, this fact alone increases the difficulty. But "D R"—I call him D R because, as a little girl, I never could understand the "Dr." in front of his name and invariably spelled it out—is a very wonderful person in the world of mental problems and psychology, and I know that he, more than anybody else, is able to bring me some measure of peace and comfort. Indeed, nobody else could.

"Tell me, D R," I asked him just a few hours ago, "can you—do you think you can help me?"

"I know it," he answered.

And for the moment I almost believed him. D R is so persuasive. He is tall, with great broad shoulders and a deep chest—I don't think any little man ever seems exactly authoritative to a woman—and his round head seems huge. But his eyes are tender as any woman's, a clear gray which, when he is greatly moved, turns almost purple in certain lights, and his mobile lips curve in a smile that makes you forget altogether the grimness of his rather heavy jaw. Even without these, he would be consoling and winning, for his voice, although

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it is a deep bass, has the sonorous sound of the notes of a cathedral organ. Finally, he is forty-eight years old, and I am only twenty-five. If he were my own age, I know I could not talk to him as I shall have to do.

"First," he explained to me, down in the library just now, "you will tell me all the things that have been worrying you. After that, we will try to see what other things, things you don't recall at once, have worried you. Then, we shall see how you can re-arrange your way of living, how we can make it a better way of living."

"A better way of living?" I asked, puzzled.

"Why, yes," he said gently. "You see, you haven't been living as you should have. As a result of what you have thought and said and done, here you are confronted by a double tragedy—or what seems a double tragedy."

"Surely," I said, "to have my love for my husband die and to know that my husband's love is dead, and to see what Charlie Corcoran has come to—surely, that is a double tragedy!"

He did not answer that, but looked at me in the queerest, and yet the most reassuring, way.

"Ruth," he told me, "this will take a lot

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of patience on your part, and a lot of work and enormous courage. Can you go through with it?"

"I must have advice and consolation," I said, "or I shall go mad. Yes, I can do it."

"You will have to tell me all things," he elaborated. "This is to be an analysis of your soul, of the depths of your soul. You will have to tell me what you believe about religion, the most intimate things about your life with your husband, the big things and the little things, sex things and all. You may keep nothing back from me. In this way only can we analyze your soul and see in what way it has gone wrong—so that, in the end, we may put it on the right track and bring you peace, happiness. You see, you suffer, not because you are sick, but because you are unhappy."

I was anxious to convince him that I would stop at nothing he asked of me.

Then, he told me that we would start to work tomorrow, that the first thing he wanted me to do was to tell him the story of everything leading up to last night, and that we would discuss it afterwards. I can see that he thinks George and I really love each other. But he will realize his mistake after he has

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heard my story. My husband and I are lost to each other forever.

If that were not true, I would not be miserable now—more than miserable, for, in addition to my grief, I feel that I am going insane. I can not think properly. The most awful ideas come into my mind. I can no longer control my thoughts. Night and day it is as if I were being ridden by devils. Real love between a man and a woman can not cause that. It is because my love is a terrible tragedy that I feel as I do.

D R told me I might spend all this afternoon and this evening writing out a description of the details of what happened last evening. He said it would freshen my memory and would enable me to tell him the story more clearly. That is what I shall do—write it all out, up to the time my mind became a blank. He has already told me what happened after that, what occurred between then and this morning, when I awoke and found him bending over me in the library.

It is an awful sensation, this knowledge that for ten or eleven hours I was saying things and doing things without knowing that I even was alive. It is such a terror to me that, if I did not have this writing to occupy

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me, I should go raving mad. Perhaps, that is why he told me I might make this diary.

At any rate, I go back now to the beginning of my tragedy and Charlie Corcoran's. I shall set down everything that began three days ago and resulted in the awful thing of last night—in my own house.

It is strange that I have spoken of my tragedy and Charlie's and not of Marjorie Nesbit's. This may be the result of what she has made me suffer. How she has made me suffer, I can not describe—the days of weeping, the nights thronged by nameless terrors. People would call me nervous. That is what they say of all women whose hearts are broken, whose lives have come to be nothing but a wringing of hands and a shedding of tears. "Nerves!"—and they shrug and pass on! But I know the truth. I have borne more than any woman can bear, and the result is that my reason is tottering, or practically destroyed.

I am, to all intents and purposes, a mad woman. And my one hope is D R.

I say he is my "hope." And yet, he is not even that to me. I do not hope. Rather, I sit here and say to myself that there is no hope, and I ask myself, how can D R expect to give

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me back my happiness, my beautiful happiness? Without hoping, I am letting him try his best, and, in the meantime, I am convinced that nothing, nobody, can ever unravel the tangle of my life or ever give me again the sweet, clean thoughts that once were mine.

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CHAPTER II

GEORGE MARDEN is my husband, and for the last year the one consuming desire of my soul has been to love him—but I can not. Three days ago, when I went down to breakfast, that thought was in my mind: that I wanted to love him, and could not.

He had reached the dining room ahead of me and was standing with his back to the open fire, waiting for me. I did not offer to let him kiss me. I knew he expected it, but I could not force myself to endure the farce of it. When I went to my chair at the table, he made no comment, but took his own place, a light little ironic smile on his face. I noticed how good-looking he was with the rays of the morning sun on his forehead and dark brown hair.

I began to pour the coffee.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

That question made me angry. I could not answer it with the cool statement that the love between us was over. He would have laughed and refused to discuss it. Besides, he would not have understood.

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"There's nothing the matter, George," I said evenly.

"I'm sorry," he retorted, in the tone he would have used to complain that the coffee was cold.

"Sorry?"

"Yes. If there were something the matter, we might be able to—to make things go better."

I did not reply to that.

After a pause, he inquired, "Seen Marjorie lately?"

My heart bounded at that question. She was the woman about whom the misunderstanding between us centered. I was amazed that he volunteered any reference to her.

"No," I said, buttering a muffin with elaborate care.

"I saw her last night," he went on.

I made no comment on that.

"She told me," he said, and I knew he was looking directly at me, "she hadn't received her invitation to your dance."

I met his gaze squarely.

"Hasn't she?" I returned coolly.

"I told her," he continued, "that it must have been lost in the mails."

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Of course, he knew no such thing had happened. He knew I had deliberately left her off the list. Nevertheless, I said:

"It must have. I'll send her another by messenger this morning—with a note of explanation."

I said that because, all of a sudden, I made up my mind that my pride was superior to my distaste for Marjorie. I would not let my husband see that I disliked the girl because of him. And yet, this was ridiculous because he knew exactly how I felt toward her.

He looked at me with his broad smile.

"Why don't you go to see her?" he suggested.

That was to hurt me!

"I shall," I said calmly.

He stared for the fraction of a second.

"Good for you!" he said, as he would have congratulated a friend for putting a horse over a stiff jump.

He was convinced, apparently, that he had never been in fault so far as Marjorie was concerned. That is his way all the time. He does things with a laugh and an air of abandon. Nothing is wrong because there is nothing wrong in his motives! He goes through life on the assumption that "every-

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thing is all right," and, if it isn't, it will be soon!

Everybody likes him. People say to me every day, "Mrs. Marden, what a charming husband you have!" His popularity is restricted to no particular class, and men as well as women like him. He is a man who uses up away from home so much of his likable qualities, so much of his pleasantness, so much of his affection, that he seems to have remaining very little demonstrativeness for his wife. At home he drifts along, giving little, accepting everything.

I do not think I am doing him an injustice. I was desperately in love with him when I married him over four years ago. He was an ideal lover. Do ideal lovers, I wonder, ever become dependable husbands? Does the verve, the dash, the exquisite spirit, which makes the man a fascinating wooer, compel him after marriage to seek much of his happiness abroad? Trying to solve my pitiful problem, I have wondered about this until my head swam.

His attitude toward Marjorie at breakfast that morning was typical of his daily behavior with me. He knew the town had been gossiping about him and her. He knew I was aware of her efforts to attract him to her side, to

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flatter her vanity if for nothing else. Above all, he could not have forgotten my grief and humiliation six months before, when he and Marjorie had spent an entire summer night on the roadside four miles out of town.

At the time Marjorie had sighed, with laughter back of the sigh, "My dear, it was awful—simply awful! What won't people say?"

And George, regarding the affair as an incident to be forgotten, had strolled in to breakfast, announced where he had been and said:

"Don't look so tragic, Ruth. What was it, after all? You didn't feel like going out to the Winslows' dinner dance, and I did. I offered to drive Marjorie home in my machine. It was frightfully late. All of us had had too much champagne—I confess it. But you know the Winslows. It was to be expected.

"Then, when we were half-way home, something went wrong with the steering gear. I got out and pottered with it in the light of my electric torch. But I couldn't fix the thing. I got tired. You know yourself what champagne does to me—makes me sleepy as an owl. I climbed back on the front seat to rest, and the first thing I knew there we were in the cold gray dawn after having had a nice little

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nap, the two of us. Then we scrambled out of the car and walked to the trolley line. That's all there is to it."

He was honest in what he said. He saw nothing to worry about in the whole affair. That was the George of it.

I do not mean to create the impression that he and I always disagreed about things. For three years I managed finally to see things as he did. But, after that, the effort became too great. I realized that it was an effort, and, when one has to make an effort all the time in order to be in accord with one's husband, one draws close to disaster.

For instance, a year ago I saw George kiss a woman—Mrs. Tarone. I never said anything to him about that. If I were to confront him with it now, he would laugh easily and advise me to quit making mountains out of molehills. That is my great difficulty. Nothing really touches him. Nothing seems to him to matter so very much. He regards my distress because of such incidents as "emotionalism." I do not believe he has ever made a serious effort to understand me, to find out whether I am a toy or a woman.

For three years, then, I had been like so many other wives. I had forced myself to

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believe what I wanted to believe. I had told myself that appearances had deceived me and that, in spite of everything to the contrary, my husband really loved me. I had done that until I saw that kiss. After that, I had known the truth—and kept it to myself. Instead of a confidence that had been more or less serene, I was possessed by a tortured pride. So far as all matters touching the real soul of me were concerned, I led a life apart. He could not have come close to my inner self if he had tried, for his inner self was so different.

After breakfast, I was as good as my word. I went to see Marjorie. On my way to her home, as I walked up Sixteenth Street, I heard newsboys crying extras about the first American casualties in France. The news did not touch me. I was too appalled by the knowledge of my own suffering to be interested in the sufferings of others. I did not even buy a paper.

As I went, I thought about Marjorie. It was not so much that I disliked her. She was merely a pawn in George's careless life, I reflected. If it had not been Marjorie, it would have been somebody else. The only thing I resented—and I did not resent that very much—was the fact that she played with

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George, although she and I had been friends since girlhood, had shared the same room at boarding school, and, although she was a year older than I, had come out together. Until my mother's death, the two families had lived next door to each other.

Moreover, I was pleased with the fact that I was going so easily to invite her to my dance. George had not expected it. Thank heaven I had self-respect enough to disregard his flirtation with her!

After all, Marjorie would never lose her head. She was of the calculating kind. She would not precipitate matters before I could arrange for my separation from George. In a sense, I felt grateful for that! Consequently, it was with a feeling of tolerance, rather than anger, toward her that I entered her house.

And I marveled at my calmness in the matter!

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CHAPTER III

SHE was not downstairs. As I was about to go up to her little den on the second floor, I heard voices, hers and a man's, in the direction of the basement kitchen.

"What's Miss Marjorie doing?" I asked Maria, the maid who had admitted me.

"'Deed, mum," answered Maria, "I'm not certain. There's a poor man, looks like a tramp, in the kitchen."

Distinctly surprised, I started to the basement. Marjorie Nesbit was not a person to busy herself ordinarily with tramps. I knew that. She was a woman who instinctively despised the unfortunate. She had long since educated herself into the conviction that the grand emotions, the things of high import to the soul of a woman, must come clad in the habiliments of appropriate splendor, must be accompanied by pomp and the symbols of power. To her nothing had ever appealed as of particular interest unless its dramatic scheme had been unrolled amid inspiring stage settings. The clash of music, the loveliness of

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lights and the seductiveness of fragrance and flowers had always been essential factors in any event that had exercised a weighty, or even a light, influence upon her life.

Poverty, crippled bodies, misfortune, tears—these were ugly phases of existence which she had studiously avoided. She had never been able to see that they benefited anybody. They belonged among the shadows, not in the bright sunlight of life, and, when they had come too near her, she had averted her eyes and closed her ears. During all her twenty-six years—for her childhood had been a sure precursor of her womanhood—she had despised inadequate circumstances, insufficient people.

No wonder that what I saw held me breathless in the doorway. Marjorie stood and faced, across the kitchen table, a man who spoke to her in a voice of peculiar resonance. He was miserably dressed, his tattered clothes hanging upon him like bags. His black hair looked matted, and upon his face was a three days' growth of heavy beard. His features were drawn, almost haggard. At first glance, he showed the signs of intense suffering, a suffering that must have been more mental than physical; and yet his manner was strangely imperious. I can not explain it,

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but there was about him the atmosphere of compelling force.

Marjorie, however, caught my attention more than he. There was upon her face a look such as I had never thought her capable of displaying, a look of complete absorption. But there was more than that in it. While they stood there, oblivious to everything but each other, I instinctively tried to define her expression. Then I saw! It was such a look as a woman should give to but one man. I was thunderstruck by it, by the intimate quality of it, the lack of anything like reserve or caution. It was a physical thing, something that looked out at him and reached toward him. It had in it perfect understanding and unspeakable desire.

And he, with his black, unnaturally brilliant eyes, entertained her glance appreciatively, without surprise. It was as if he had expected it and knew that she would give it to him. It seemed to me that here were two persons who had known each other throughout their lives, two persons who had met upon a common ground and had joined hands, saying, "Let us go together—we know!—we are companions."

"Why ask me what I am going to do?" he was saying. "How can I tell? How can

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you tell what you will do this afternoon or tomorrow or next year? You can not. I can not. People say they will do this or that. The idiots! They will do what they are made to do, made by their past. All my past is on my back. It is a tremendous weight, like an avalanche, that continually thrusts me onward and downward to—what? Every thought I have had, every act I have committed, every word I have spoken, they all have been added to this thing which, like a slowly moving and irresistible mass, pushes me hither and thither.

"You understand, I'm sure. The fraud I may have committed ten years ago—would it not urge me on to other frauds? The pain in the eyes of the bird whose nest I wantonly robbed when I was a boy—did it not predict further cruelty on my part? The tears of a woman I wronged fifteen years ago—do they not make it easier for me to mistreat some other woman now? We say we are free. Bah! When one has done many things and thought many things, one is no longer free. One will go on doing and thinking things of the same kind."

He reached down to the floor and picked up a battered derby hat. Still, Marjorie's eyes followed him—hungrily.

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"You understand, I know," he said in his resonant, low voice. "You are one who would understand. There are in you the great fires of life. You are afraid of them, but some day you will yield to their charm, will let them carry you away. And you will not be able to help it. You have felt the lure of their beauty too long."

For a brief moment their glances held, interlocked as if by physical means, his burning and assured, hers warm and eager. After that, a slow sigh came through her half-parted lips, and her bosom rose and fell once as if a mighty storm threatened her.

Then she caught sight of me. At first, she did not speak. When she called my name, I got somehow the impression that she came back to reality, as if her spirit had been far away for a while.

"He has been telling me," she said, without any trace of embarrassment, "why he will always be a tramp."

He still had his eyes upon her, drinking up the heady wine of her beauty. It seemed to me that he took in and appraised every part of her loveliness—the masses of her red-bronze hair piled high upon her head, the fire of her tawny eyes, the richness of her full, red mouth,

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and the ample, almost matronly, lines of her throat and neck. I had always thought of her as statuesque, but there was none of that quality in her then—rather, a soft voluptuousness.

The man did not even glance at me as he moved slowly toward the door.

He bowed to Marjorie, and, although I saw how gaunt and spare he was, I was struck by the native grace in his movement.

"You have been very kind," he said simply, indicating with a casual gesture of his right hand the remains of the food on the kitchen table.

Marjorie, in her turn oblivious of me, followed him to the door, and spoke.

"Tomorrow" and "come" were the only two words I heard her utter, but I knew that she asked him, a note of command in her voice, to return the following morning. And he, still assured and confident, bowed again and smiled. Somehow, the smile made me shudder a little.

Marjorie turned to me in the most natural way in the world.

"Let's go upstairs," she said in her fresh, musical voice, and followed me out of the kitchen.

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As we sat down in the parlor, I asked her, "Where's your mother?"

I think the question came from my very distinct feeling that Marjorie needed protection, that she was in imminent danger.

"Downtown," she answered, and sat for a moment looking thoughtfully out the window. "That man, that tramp," she said, "is the most interesting man I ever encountered."

"He seems so," I agreed in a colorless tone.

"He knows life."

"Does he?"

After that, she left the subject, and I invited her to my dance, telling quite an elaborate and plausible little lie to explain why she had not received the invitation by mail. She said she would come.

Going down Sixteenth Street, I walked like one bewildered. I was not surprised that Marjorie talked familiarly to the tramp if she wished. She always did what she felt like doing. With her, I reflected, it was merely a yielding to her own desires, never a consideration of other people or what other people might say. But the thing that astounded me was what I had seen in her face. Why, it had been indecent, something I thought foreign to her thoughts and feelings, awful!

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I remembered her having repeated to me once what one of her rejected suitors had said to her:

"You tell me, and you have told others, you can't love. That isn't true. The trouble about you is that you're afraid to love. You're afraid of yourself, afraid to let yourself go."

Had that man been right in his estimate of her?

Ever since her début, her life had been a continuous performance of attracting men, the most eligible men in the city, and then dismissing them. She always had had plenty of admirers in her train, for her beauty had been fortified by her wit and by that commanding air of aloofness which is so often such an effective spur to the ardor of men. But nobody had ever credited her with warmth of feeling, with "intenseness." She had always done exactly as she pleased, but her preferences had never led her into conflict with conventionality.

But on this morning, just a few minutes ago, I had seen an entirely new Marjorie. It was as if a foreign spirit had rushed into the body of Marjorie and taken violent possession of her, molding her figure to lines that had in them a certain sinuous softness, fashioning her

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lips to a telltale and fuller design, lighting her eyes with an evil torch.

What manner of woman was she? I asked myself. Had her life been one long wary battle to conceal from everybody her real self? Had her strongest emotions been held in leash because she was ashamed of them, or afraid of them? Was her soul a painted soul, a fugitive creature imprisoned behind the bars of her silent lips and baffling eyes?

I could not help asking myself those questions. Had I not seen that look on her face? Had I not been convinced that she was like a person who plays with danger gladly? I had even been reminded, involuntarily, of the beauty of those flowers which thrive best in dank, filthy soil. Had those imprisoned fires of hers helped to mold her in such unusual and striking beauty?

Then, I thought of George, and—stopped thinking of him. No matter what had happened, I would not admit that my husband had ever seen in her the strange woman whom I had surprised there in the kitchen.

Suddenly I was aware that somebody was calling to me. I looked around, and there at the curb, in his big gray roadster, was Charlie Corcoran. He sprang from the car

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and came toward me. It struck me that he seemed unusually elated. His step had a new buoyancy. And this was saying a great deal, for Charlie was always in good spirits.

As he stood before me, tall and almost too slender, the slight stoop in his shoulders emphasizing his graceful carriage of himself, the midday sun shining full on his handsome face and fair hair, I could not help envying him a little—he seemed so altogether blessed, so utterly a stranger to the ugly and distressing things of life.

"Come with me!" he commanded in mock authority, and led me to the machine.

Charlie has a quick, dashing air. His whole soul goes into anything he does—anything from a ride in an automobile to a love affair. I like him, always have liked him, very much. We have been chums for years.

I made him drive me home, and he followed me into the house.

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CHAPTER IV

I LED him into the library—the library is the "homiest" room in the house—and he started in on one of his joyous tirades. Charlie's talking is always more or less of a cascade of words, even though somebody has said that his thin, expressive face is half of his vocabulary.

"Ruth," he began, flinging himself on the big leather couch in front of me, "I've come to praise you and to worship you. Please realize that at this moment I am burning incense in your temple. A string of choir boys a mile long is singing a triumphant anthem composed by myself in your honor, and the high priest of gratitude is exhorting a million devotees to live up to your example—which is mercy and loving kindness."

Somehow, his exuberance of spirits did not call forth any response from me. I was afraid he would see how weary I felt. I forced myself to ask him, "What is it all about, Charlie?"

"Ethel Gilmore," he replied. "I prostrate

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myself before you, I lift my voice in thanksgiving, because you prevented me from marrying her."

"Oh, she?" My voice was contemptuous.

"It delights me to report," he swept on, with a sigh of mock relief, "that I saw her in a café last night and came away unscathed. When my eyes rested upon her, my blood pressure was not increased, and my heart failed to beat a fraction of a second faster. Not a tear moistened my smoothly shaven cheeks. Ruth, I'm cured!"

"How on earth you ever imagined yourself in love with her, I can't understand," I said impatiently. "A woman divorced by her husband, a woman talked about by the whole of Washington, a woman who was not received by most of us—oh, Charlie, why did you?"

"That's just the point. I didn't. But, if you hadn't brought me to my senses, this same fair Ethel would now be Mrs. Corcoran. That's why the choir boys sing in your temple and the incense goes up in suffocating clouds."

He slapped his knee with his right hand and laughed. "Ye gods! Do you remember how my heart bled when you explained to me the folly of my loving her? I, a man twenty-nine years old, with a heart that bled!"

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"But why all this jubilation now, after so long a time?"

I was wishing he would leave.

"A new divinity!" he explained. "Honestly, Ruth, this time it is for life."

I was genuinely surprised, particularly when I saw how serious his eyes were.

"Who is she?"

"Marjorie Nesbit," he said, much as he might have pronounced the name of Christ—it was so reverent.

Instinctively, I turned my face from him. For one bewildered moment two things were battling grotesquely in my consciousness, the reverence in his voice and my memory of what I had seen in Marjorie's face that morning. I wanted to scream aloud, to shake him, to tell him what a fool he was.

What I did do was to turn toward him and say, "I didn't know that was serious."

He was so taken up with his own thoughts that he did not notice the coldness in my voice.

"It's a secret so far," he confided with a solemnity that actually hurt me, "but I can tell you. She promised last night to marry me."

"She's accepted you!"

"Why, yes," he said, a little taken aback by

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my astonished manner, and added, "Yes, she has."

I felt my lower lip quiver, and I knew there were tears in my eyes, but I couldn't help it.

"Oh!" I said tremulously. "Oh, Charlie, I hope you'll be wonderfully—wonderfully happy."

He looked at me searchingly.

"I don't understand," he puzzled. "What do you mean, Ruth? Don't you like her?"

His voice was something new, more aloof and formal than it had ever been in talking to me.

I burst into tears.

"Forgive me, Charlie," I said between my ridiculous sobs. "I know you'll be happy, and—and I'm a disagreeable person. I suppose I'm so—so fond of the men I do like that, even in my friendship and in my desire to see them happy, I—hate to see them swept away from me by—by marriage."

"I see," he agreed, but he did not see at all.

He got to his feet while I dabbed away the tears.

"You're so fine," I said, "I know you'll be happy, and you'll make her happy. I know it. I know it!"

He took my hand.

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"That's good of you, Ruth," he said with a return to some of his old enthusiasm, but I could tell that he was worried, unable to understand my behavior.

"I guess I'm due at the club," he added, and started toward the door.

There he hesitated and finally came back to where I sat. All at once I was aware of his embarrassment. He wanted to say something and did not know how to frame it in words. I waited for him to speak.

"Ruth, what's up?" he asked abruptly.

"What do you mean?"

"What's troubling you?"

"Nothing," I told him without looking up at him.

"Nothing?" he insisted.

"Not a thing on earth."

"But you aren't well—I mean happy, are you?"

"Yes—quite."

"I didn't think so." He clung to his wish to help me and blurted out the words. "You see, Ruth, there are just two kinds of married women, after all: those who love their husbands and don't care anything about the society of other men, and those who don't love their husbands and make up for it by the ex-

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citement of having a good many men as their friends."

I looked up at him and made my eyes very wide with surprise.

"What do you mean, Charlie?"

"Oh, hang it all!" he said desperately. "Why won't you let me help you? You know what I mean. You are so kind to Dick Jerdyce and Tom Fordney and me that I thought you were trying to make friendship for us take the place of the greater happiness at home. That's what I mean."

The solemnity of his tone, the real sorrow in his voice, amazed me. I had never seen Charlie in such a mood. To me he had always seemed the spirit of levity, ignoring anything deep or important in life. That was why I liked him.

I made no comment on what he had said.

"I thought there might be something about George that worried you," he forced himself to finish. "And I know I could help. George is so thoroughly all right, don't you know."

I looked up at him through misty eyes.

"Thanks, Charlie," I said, "but you're mistaken. I'm thoroughly happy."

He looked relieved.

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"When I'm so happy myself, so lucky," he explained clumsily, "I hate to think of anybody else, especially you, as being miserable. You—you'll forgive my butting in, won't you?"

When he had gone, I shed bitter tears.

But I was not weeping for Charlie, either when I thought of his high spirits because of his love or when there flashed into my mind again the picture of that strange, repugnant Marjorie I had seen facing and desiring—yes, desiring—the "gentleman tramp." That light had been in her eyes a bare twelve hours after she had promised to become Charlie's wife. And he worshipped her!

The idea was terrible. I realized that in a sort of cold, academic way. But the thing that really hurt me was that George should ever have liked a woman who could deceive as basely as Marjorie had done. I was borne down, overwhelmed, by the weight of my own mortification and distress.

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CHAPTER V

WHILE the tears still stood in my eyes, Jeffries announced Doctor Doyle.

"Show him in here," I directed.

For the first time in my life, I did not want to see D R. I was in one of my "shut-in" moods. I did not want to see anybody on earth. What was the use? I asked myself desperately.

And yet, I ought to have been greatly pleased by his call in the middle of the day. D R is always so busy. People come to him from all parts of the country for the relief nobody else has been able to give them—men who are no longer able to work; women whose nights have become stalking places for horrors while their days are monotonous records of pain; people who have found no respite in bromides or morphine; poor, worthless wrecks of once happy beings who have lost their happiness forever. He is my ideal of the Great Physician, the Great Healer.

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And he is famous—famous in Europe as he is here. D R is so much of an all-round man. His eminence is not confined to his profession. As an after-dinner speaker, he is forever in demand. His love and knowledge of music are proverbial, and he knows all there is to know, I think, about art and literature, history and mythology, science and current events. He is, indeed, a great, a very great man.

Any other woman would have been flattered by a visit from one so famous. What woman does not like the companionship of the famous? And there was I, feeling nothing but resentment and irritation because he had closed his office earlier than his custom and sought me out!

A Japanese bowl full of cigarettes stood on the table at my elbow. I took one and lit it with the alcohol lighter. When D R came in, there was a little cloud of smoke between him and me. When I spoke to him, I had upon me the mantle of forced vivacity. I did not propose to let him see that I was unhappy, or even worried.

"Didn't expect me this time of day, did you?" he asked, with his slow, youthful smile.

"No," I answered; "such a busy, important man as you, D R."

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He took one of the cigarettes and slowly lit it without answering me. Then he sat down on the big couch where Charlie had been. Something in his wonderful eyes brought a little catch up in my throat.

"Ruth," he said, his voice a little low, "won't you let me help you?"

"Do you think I need it?" I returned, involuntarily and immediately defiant.

I had put another haze of smoke between us. I wished that he had not come.

"Why," I asked, my words coming fast, "should I need the help of a man who treats crazy people and analyzes criminals for the chief of police? Do you think I do?"

"I know that you are greatly troubled," he said, very tenderly.

"Not troubled—annoyed—disgusted!" I burst forth, emphasizing the last two adjectives with wide sweeps of my hands.

Leaning back on the couch, he did not answer me immediately. In some way, he made the silence a definition of his sympathy.

"What is it?" he asked at last.

"Oh, it isn't much—a man," I returned flippantly.

"But it is much," he said earnestly. "It's a great deal. It is so much that you are not

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yourself at all. I have watched you for months."

I made a gesture of impatience. I realized that my feelings were running away with me.

"It was because of my love for you," he reminded me. "You say the unkindest things in the most cruel manner. You form antipathies and take dislikes for no reason on earth. You alternate between a gloom which has no real foundation and a continual chase after a happiness which you never find."

While he walked to the table and lit another cigarette, I said nothing, but I know my lip was curled to contempt. For the moment, I was like a person with a front of brass.

"You've forgotten what happiness is," he continued, and there was no reproach in his voice. "You are shutting yourself off from all who love you. You are trying to depend on nobody but yourself. You are striving to build happiness out of sneers and cigarettes—and it won't work. Really, it won't. Ruth, you have become in the last year selfish—tremendously. You think of nobody but yourself. Won't you tell me why?"

At that, I sprang to my feet and put my hands on his shoulders.

"I don't think I'm selfish at all, D R!" I

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cried, trying to shake him as an emphasis of my words. "I know I'm not. But I have a great deal to stand—more than I can bear."

My voice broke.

"So many women think the same thing," he reminded me.

"Oh, D R," I concluded, "sometimes I think I can stand no more!"

"What is it?"

I went back to my chair. When I spoke again, it was with an air of desperation.

"It's Marjorie Nesbit, and ——"

I checked myself, started to speak again, and was silent, tapping the carpet with the toe of my shoe.

"Marjorie and George, of course," he said without surprise.

I leaned toward him suddenly, my excitement grown big. He resumed his place on the couch.

"So you have seen it!" I said tensely.

"No," he answered me in his gentle, even tone; "I've seen only what has been in your thoughts."

"It's not in my thoughts at all," I said, my words jumbled together in nervous haste. "It's in reality. It's in my life. It's in my own house. Just imagine it! This peculiar

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woman who is sought by men like Charlie Corcoran! I don't mean anything against Charlie, but you know he doesn't amount to much—now, does he?"

D R had stopped smiling. He looked at me as if he attempted to solve a scientific problem, neither commending nor pitying me.

"Oh," he said easily, "he's a very good sort of fellow. You kept him from marrying an undesirable woman, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes," I agreed carelessly. "In spite of his wildness and drinking, he's a good sort—and then, he belongs to our set." Agitation overtook me again. "But for George to be mad about her! Other people see it. I know they do, and his lunacy makes a fool out of me! And I am tied hand and foot. If I threw her out of my house some time, if I insulted her, it would be merely a confession of weakness. My pride couldn't stand it."

For the first time D R spoke firmly.

"This is the wildest nonsense, Ruth. George loves you."

"If he does," I complained bitterly, "it is a love past my understanding."

He leaned over and took my hands in his.

"That is the hard part of love," he said, as if he instructed a child. "So much of it is

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not understood. It is hard, but love is like that, often—very often."

Momentarily my mood softened.

"I wonder, D R," I said a little wistfully, "whether you could help me."

"Helping people is my profession," he assured me.

He regarded me affectionately and added, "What started the trouble, Ruth?"

In spite of myself, I felt all hard and bitter once more.

"It's nothing particularly new," I said with a laugh that was almost all a sneer. "It hasn't the virtue of novelty, D R. It's only that I don't—oh, well, my husband and I don't suit."

He was silent, and I added flippantly, "My story is every woman's. I think I might write a play, a new Everywoman."

I could see that he realized he had made no impression upon me, had failed to get through the wall of bitterness I had built up around myself. But all he said was,

"Some day, Ruth, you'll come to me for help—and find it."

I laughed incredulously and asked him if he was coming to my dance. D R's presence in any woman's house is a society event.

"Don't say you're not coming," I com-

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manded. "The orchestra has been engaged just to please your discriminating ear."

"Of course, I'll come—if you want me," he said, preparing to go.

"You will be," I told him, "my greatest attraction."

Looking back upon that talk now, I can see that he really knew how I suffered, really had a general idea of why I suffered. He said I was wrong in depending upon myself. But upon whom else was I to depend then? Upon whom else may I depend now? My husband has failed me. Am I not utterly alone in all the world?

I know now that I have been for a very long time exactly like hundreds of other women I have seen and known. They look worn out, dissatisfied, miserable. To them, life has become barren, a tragedy. The flowers are all swept away, and there is left in their places only sham, make-believe, the paper blossoms that are without beauty and perfume. My face is companion to the faces of those women—it has the irritable look, the strained expression, the weary eyes, the perceptible tightness about the corners of the mouth, all the badges of bitterness.

And certainly my life is like theirs. There

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are times when I despise the thought of associating with anybody, when I shrink from the sound of others' voices, when I feel a hot scorn for everybody. These periods are followed by feverish days and nights when I try to pack the hours with every possible kind of amusement and distraction. Instead of giving myself up to morbid thoughts and introspection, I throw myself into motoring, bridge, golf, the theater, dancing—but the enjoyment is ashes in my mouth, my laughter is always forced. I am trying to forget the misery caused by the knowledge of my husband's coldness, his lack of love. I often wonder if the world ever senses even a little bit of what we neglected wives suffer.

Here we are, an endless parade of good-looking women, luxuriously housed, exquisitely gowned, elegantly groomed, sleek, bejeweled. That is what the world sees and envies. But there is the other, the real, side of the picture—here we are, mourning in secret, weeping in the dark, starving for love, hungering for affection, reaching out futile hands for the dreams we shall never, never realize, hiding our broken hearts under silks and pendants—hiding them from the world, but never from ourselves.

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There must be, I think, a special hell for the men who give young wives all that money can buy and nothing at all that comes from love, appreciation, soft little caresses, approving glances, whispered endearments. The soul of a woman demands far more luxury than does her body. And, if that soul luxury is not given by her husband, she looks for it otherwhere, seeks to compel it from the world, sometimes by rash and audacious methods, sometimes by pitiful little subterfuges and substitutions.

How full the world is of women trying to build up pathetic little palaces of happiness! And how pitifully they fail when the corner stone has been destroyed at home forever!

I know, because I am one of them—and I have failed. There is left me only this despair, and with the despair come thoughts that lift me from my chair and drive me from room to room and send me sometimes cowering against the wall. I have thoughts which I am afraid to admit even to myself.

And I have only this last resort, the promise of D R that he can teach me how to regain my happiness. Do you wonder that I doubt? To me, happiness seems to have fled beyond

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the edge of the horizon. How can D R, with all his skill, build up the trail that will take me to it again?

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CHAPTER VI

THE evening for my dance came, and George and I—standing side by side, with that impalpable but impenetrable wall of coldness between us—welcomed our guests. I remember that, above everything else, my purpose was to demonstrate, for all the world to see, my complete unconsciousness of there being anything between Marjorie and my husband. I had thought it all out. If D R had detected my suffering because of Marjorie, and if Charlie Corcoran had sensed it in his kindly, blundering fashion, might it not be possible that others had suspected it? To disarm those suspicions was my plan, then, last night.

I would be more than friendly to Marjorie. I would even show her unusual attentions. And, as for my own attitude, I would be in a gale of good spirits. I was tensed very high, dangerously high. I felt as if every nerve and ligament in my body had been strung taut. But I was sure of myself, certain that I should

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triumph and silence any talk that might have started.

Marjorie and I had met the afternoon before in a shop downtown, and the meeting had been natural, unconstrained, without any embarrassment whatever. While we talked I asked her laughingly whether she had seen the "interesting tramp" again. At that, she hesitated for a moment, but said finally, "Yes, I've seen him again. He's quite remarkable."

She was among the first arrivals last night. I had never seen her so lovely. In pale blue satin, with little pink roses set singly in her corsage and a cluster of pink roses at her belt, she was beautifully unaware of the effect she had worked for hours to produce. Under the soft lights of the chandeliers, her hair looked more than ever like burnished copper. Her tawny eyes were brilliant. I thought I detected in them a new expression, one quite new to her, a look of nervousness, almost indecision. For the first time in all my life, I thought she labored under a strain. But she was as statuesque, as "superior," as ever.

Soon after she appeared, I heard old Mrs. Susie Mason, who always says exactly what she thinks, confide to somebody behind me:

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"Look at that Nesbit girl. What a tremendous possibility for evil the creature is!"

And, in spite of the thoroughness with which I had myself in hand, I felt for a moment ill at ease.

Half an hour later in the front drawing-room, my attention wandered from the little group of women with whom I had been talking, and I became conscious of George and Marjorie close by. She was looking at him with provocative eyes—somebody has called her eyes "unsatisfactory because, knowing what they can reveal, she has taught them to hide everything." I could not see his face.

"If you insist," I heard her say in a high, clear voice; and she handed him her card.

He said something that made her laugh.

"Ananias, I believe," she rebuked him, "was not a dancing man."

Just then he turned and caught my glance. My eyes, I am sure, were bleak with accusation. I could not help it.

It was after eleven when, in looking for D R, I made my way into the library and found him there with Charlie Corcoran. The two men stood at the table in the middle of the room, newly lighted cigarettes in their hands,

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"You're playing me false, D R!" I reproached. "You're here as my star attraction, my great exhibit, and you run away from my guests!"

"Probably," suggested the irrepressible Charlie, with a bow that would have done honor to royalty, "for the pleasure of being thus pursued."

I picked up a cigarette, and Charlie held the lighter for me. I felt a momentary gratification that my hand did not tremble as I handled the cigarette. I was awfully nervous.

"A problem for you in psychology," I flashed irritably to D R. "Is it Society that makes people foolish, or is it merely foolish people who make Society?"

Charlie answered.

"To be a foolish person in a perfectly graceful manner," he said, "is the only real demand Society makes of anybody."

"Then you've met the demand. You're perfectly foolish over Marjorie Nesbit!"

I had not meant to say that or anything like it, and yet nothing could have kept the words from my lips. D R's brows went up a trifle, and Charlie flushed.

"But I don't blame you, Charlie," I added

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in a swirl of words. "She's brilliant. She's lovely. She's alluring. I believe she ——"

Both of them were looking toward the door leading from the ballroom. I glanced around and saw Marjorie.

"You're just in time," I said gaily, putting my arm round her waist as she joined us. "Charlie has been sighing for you."

She did not look at Charlie, and instantaneously I got the impression that she was sorry to find him there.

I turned swiftly to D R.

"You two are the twin stars," I commented, "Marjorie for loveliness, you for brains."

Marjorie laughed indolently.

"What a neat way of calling me idiot," she drawled lazily.

"You goose!" I denied. "Your hats alone would disprove that. Once a season a genius comes among us. It is always the woman who knows how to select her own hats. And the one you wore yesterday was the height of all your achievements."

"I would award that praise to her hair," interjected Charlie, to whom she had not yet cast even a glance.

"Oh, no," I corrected. "Women choose the hats, God chose the hair."

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The music for the next dance began.

"This is mine, I believe," Charlie spoke across the group to Marjorie and came around to her side.

She hesitated a moment and then turned with him toward the ballroom.

"What an excellent memory you have!" Irony was in her voice. "I came in here to rest because I had forgotten the dance was taken."

"Charlie," I called after him, "don't forget Mary Calhoun."

Mary is a hopeless débutante with a fixed habit of never having partners.

As they disappeared, I seated myself on the table, swinging my feet, like a child.

"D R, I detest her—thoroughly," I said almost breathlessly.

"So I saw," he answered, leaning against the back of the morris chair and looking at me intently.

"So you saw?" I was surprised.

"Yes—so I saw."

"How?"

"Effusiveness such as you showed her is always used to cover up dislike. Besides, you went out of your way to call her a fool."

My irritation grew.

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I slid from the table and stood rapping it with my left hand.

"Why do I entertain women?" I exclaimed. "Why do I annoy myself with them at all? They are the bane of my existence."

"How?" he asked quietly.

"Take Mary Calhoun—utterly stupid!" I burst forth in a storm of unbridled condemnation. "Her feet are her only accomplishment. Why, D R, if that girl develops a chilblain, her mother is more concerned than if she had a clot on the brain. On the other hand, there's Marjorie Nesbit—immensely clever. The ones with minds have no morals, and the ones with morals have nothing."

My manner defied him to rebuke me.

"I wonder, Ruth," he said gently, "if you realize how different you are from the happy, kindly, beautiful woman you were a little more than a year ago."

"Do you think I am?" I asked, and immediately forced myself back into the flippant mood.

"Oh, D R," I said, imitating the manner of a stump orator, "you're so wise you frighten me. You, with your psychology, know everything—why the moon is called 'she' and all the woman-myths about her; the terrific sig-

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nificance of the fact that men erect on their temples of worship long steeples that reach toward the sky; and why brides wear orange blossoms in their hair. You know the work of Gerard Dow and Velasquez. Kant, Swedenborg, Freud and all the rest of them are at your finger tips. You know why Shakespeare wrote Hamlet, and you can tell what effect Byron's club-foot had on his verse. Oh, what a wise man you are! You have analyzed in your own mind the souls of our statesmen. You can trace the causes of crime. You know everything!"

I waved my hands above my head and laughed. He did not answer me.

As suddenly as it had come, frivolity left me. I was about to apologize when Mary Calhoun's sharp voice reached me.

"Oh, Mrs. Marden," she said from the double door at the back of the room, "Mr. Corcoran told me you wanted to see me."

"Did he?" I returned with thinly veiled sarcasm. "That was so nice of him!"

I turned to D R as Mary came forward.

"And now, D R, do go and let my guests see you. Talk for five minutes to that dear old Mrs. Phillips. You'll find her interesting. Her hair is a survival of the Indian custom

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of scalping others for one's own beautification."

"I shall be delighted to meet such a warrior," he laughed, obeying my direction.

I turned to the Calhoun girl.

"It's so nice of you, Mary, to desert all those young men and come in to see me."

My show of affection was overdone. I took scarcely any care to conceal my boredom. I was tired.

"I came in, Mrs. Marden," she said, balling her handkerchief in her hands, "really because I had heard something I thought you ought to know."

"Really?"

"Yes—about Marjorie Nesbit."

"Indeed!" The sarcasm was broad.

"Of course," she explained, shifting her weight from one foot to the other, "I know it isn't true, because Marjorie never was in love with anybody in her life. That's why it sounded so absurd to me. That's why I thought I'd tell you. It was something I heard about her and—well, you know it always has seemed to me that married women would like to hear what's being said about their husbands and—and other women. So few of them really do hear it, you know."

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Trying to maintain the appearance of self-control, I held my hands behind me, clutching my fan with all my strength.

"Yes?" I said slowly. "That's exceedingly interesting."

"This was something about Marjorie and Mr. Marden."

I did not answer that, and Mary, mistaking my silence for interest, continued:

"It was something Mrs. Mason said. She was talking about Marjorie and Mr. Marden just now, and she said—she said you were either the most stupid or the most stupendous character in the world. She said ——"

The girl checked herself, her mouth half open, as she saw for the first time the anger in my face. I lifted both my hands as if to strike her. Why I didn't, I don't know.

"How dare you say such a thing to me?" I demanded, my voice coming shrill through the contracted muscles of my throat. "How dare you!" I made a wild gesture toward the door. "Out of here! Go out, I tell you!" I stamped both feet, one after the other. "Leave me before I lose the last bit of my self-control."

Absolutely terrified, she sank to the edge of the chair behind her and tried to speak. She

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swallowed the lump in her throat twice before she succeeded in regaining her voice.

"I—I don't know," she stammered. "I'm so sorry. I ——"

"You idiot!" I told her, as I hurried toward the door to the ballroom. "You perfect little idiot! Never enter my house again. You are as insolent as you are stupid!"

I left her, that ridiculous look of fright still on her face.

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CHAPTER VII

BACK in the ballroom, Dick Jerdyce swept me into a one-step.

"Don't talk to me, Dick," I said. "I've chattered so much my head's going around like a pinwheel."

I was scarcely conscious of dancing. The one idea that kept crowding through my mind was that I must keep myself in hand, that under no circumstances must I let myself go, that I must carry through my plan of showing that Marjorie did not annoy me. It was all the more necessary now, I thought bitterly. Everybody knew about her and George—even that silly little child who had brought the story to me!

Suddenly I felt the need of being alone, of having a few minutes in which to regain self-control. My breath was coming and going so fast that it was like gasps. I wanted air.

I left Dick and, making my escape from everybody, went down the hall leading to the back veranda. Looking on this veranda is one

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of the library windows. And, further on, are steps leading down into the gardens behind the house, and a door that is an exit from the conservatory.

When I got to the library window, I heard Marjorie's voice. Although it was late October and the night was chilly, the window was open, and through the light curtains that rippled a little in the breeze I saw Marjorie and Charlie. Without hesitation, without calculation, but in obedience to a blind instinct, I went to the window and listened to what they were saying. I had never done such a thing in all my life. If I had stopped to think, I would not have done it then. But there was no power of thought left in me. I was all *feeling*. I was like a stricken thing that darts hither and thither in the hope of relief or comfort or help of some sort. I did not even know why I listened. I remember that my handkerchief was pressed tight against my lips as if I feared I would scream. And I was trembling like a leaf in the wind.

Charlie was standing at the reading table, the soft light flooding his handsome face and showing the expression of anxiety that was on it. Marjorie sat in the morris chair across the table from him. I could see her face also. It

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wore that look of aloofness and near-boredom I knew so well.

"Of course, we ended all that last night," she was saying.

Her attitude suggested extreme languor.

"A thing like that is not easily ended," he contradicted tensely.

She looked at him and, in doing it, exasperated him.

"I don't think," she said with a little laugh, "I ever have found it difficult."

"But some day you may —find it difficult," he answered, and all at once Charlie, who had been the spendthrift of his time, the waster of his own energy, took on somehow the dignity of determined manhood.

Marjorie fanned herself slowly, and, looking up to him again, laughed softly.

"Why weep for the future?" she derided him.

He clenched his hands at his sides.

"Marjorie, why do you laugh?" he demanded.

"Because," she replied tranquilly, "at last you have succeeded in doing what few others have done. You amuse me."

"I saw you laugh like that at George Marden just now, when you were dancing

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with him," he said hotly. "I suppose he amuses you?"

"No," she admitted. "He puzzles me—greatly. And I've made quite a study of him."

I shrank as if I had been struck. I had the peculiar sensation of feeling far-off and being physically smaller.

Charlie put his hands, palms down, on the table and leaned toward Marjorie so that the reading lamp threw into still bolder relief his indignant face.

"How wonderfully, how marvelously, you have deceived me!" he said.

"How beautifully you flatter me," she laughed again.

"Marjorie," he told her, his arms trembling, "I couldn't believe you when you told me last night you did not love me. But I believe you now. You have never loved any man. And there's not the remotest possibility of your ever loving me."

The music for the next dance began. It was a light, rollicking tune intended to picture gayety and love. Marjorie started to rise.

"One moment," he commanded. "All that's true, isn't it—that you will never love me?"

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"Quite," she answered resignedly, sinking back into the chair.

"What a stupendous comedy you have played!" he denounced her.

He stood erect, bitterness linking his words together, and occasionally he struck the table with his clenched hand.

"What lovely lies! You have lied to me with your words—lied to me with your eyes—lied to me with your smiles. You have in your voice fifty tones that are nothing but fifty different kinds of lies! And it means that you're the greatest coward that ever stepped the earth. You torture the hearts of the people who have no redress, no possible means of revenge. They have no revenge because you have no heart!"

She put up her hand, frowning her irritation, but he swept on:

"Why, you're not a real woman at all—not a woman to be wooed with love or won by adoration! You're the other sort of woman. You're an alien to all the beauties that are not above the skin. You are one who ought to be taken by force and bruised and crushed and hurt. You ought to have passion forced upon you. Then you'd come to know the sort of beggarly, trembling love that is the child of

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physical fear. If any man ever treats you so, he'll break you and make you crawl at his feet and thank him for the way in which he has degraded you."

He stopped and regarded her, his chest heaving, his right hand at his collar as if he sought to give room to his rapid breath.

"Charlie!"

She spoke his name sharply and looked at him with intense interest.

He was surprised by her tone, which had in it a color he had never known.

"What?"

I could see that he was wondering what that new note in her voice meant. To me, even in my storming rage, it recalled for a moment the way she had spoken to the tramp at the door of her mother's kitchen.

She was leaning far back in the chair now, all the lines of her figure relaxing.

"Come here,'" she said.

He could not believe that he really heard the thing in her voice. He walked slowly round the table and stood in front of her.

"Round here," she directed softly, indicating the place at her left; "here—on this side."

When he had obeyed her, she let her head

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rest on the back of the chair, her face turned upward to him, her eyelids lowered. Her lips were half-parted. And her arms were limp on the arms of the chair. Her fan dropped from her right hand to the floor. He did not pick it up. He was fighting for clear consciousness, was trying to say to himself that there could be no possibility of her telling him that she loved him.

She looked up at him at last, a slow, new smile on her lips. Her breast rose and fell rapidly. She was all abandon. The eyes she had schooled to conceal her thoughts revealed them.

Held by her gaze, he bent over her, resting both his hands on the left arm of her chair. They looked at each other a long time. The questions he asked and the answers she gave were without words.

The spell broke. He started erect and flung out both his arms, making the gesture eloquent of despair. His clenched hands came together as if he sought to choke to death an enemy. He turned from her and walked with slow, groping steps to the bookcase near the conservatory door. His arms fell rigid at his sides. He went like a man mortally stricken. He stood with his back to her a moment

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while she watched him, the new smile still on her lips, the strange look still in her eyes.

Again he put out his hands in that gesture of choking some one. His long, nervous fingers writhed. It was gruesome to see. It was as if for the moment he had in his surging thoughts the picture of her white throat under his spasmodic grasp. I shall never forget the realism of it—never!

At last he faced her and passed both his trembling hands across his eyes.

"Oh, Marjorie!" he groaned in tremendous sorrow.

"Well?" Her voice was a base temptation.

He took one step toward her and stood, half-dazed.

"Do you know—do you know what I saw—in your eyes?"

"A confession—of myself," she laughed softly, confidingly.

He sprang forward and towered above her.

"Then, by heaven, it's true!" he said with infinite bitterness. "Oh, I knew what it was! I've seen it before, in the eyes of women—hellish women. You can buy it from some women's eyes! But they aren't such women

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as you, Marjorie—not such a woman as I thought you."

He stared at her for a moment in silence. He seemed too astounded to concentrate his ideas, too shaken to believe what he knew to be true.

"Why, Marjorie, that is an awful thing—a damnable discovery!" he said wildly. "You, Marjorie! All body and no soul!"

She regained her tranquillity. Irony was in her voice, and nothing in her eyes.

"Then you disapprove," she said lightly.

She rose and turned toward the door to the ballroom.

"What a mistake," she added, "to change what might have been a warm little comedy into a farce."

She had taken two steps when Charlie sprang to her side and grasped the bare flesh of her right arm. There was brutality in his grip.

"Oh, no," he said roughly. "You come with me."

He indicated the door leading to the conservatory.

She looked at him coldly.

"The farce is done," she answered him, anger in her voice.

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"And reality is about to begin," he countered, his compelling grasp stronger upon her arm. His gaze was domineering, and blazing with desire, animal and unhidden desire.

She laughed, and there was a strident note in her voice.

"What heroics!" she bantered him, armed in all her cool self-possession.

Then she followed him into the conservatory.

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CHAPTER VIII

I LEFT the window and went back to the hall and into the library. There was still upon me that strange feeling of being far off, of being another person and watching with strained eyes my real self. I repeated under my breath several times:

"Marjorie is low—low—bad."

Twice within three days I had seen the real Marjorie, the sensual woman, once with Charlie, once with a nondescript of the streets who had come to her back door begging bread! And that was the woman who had attracted my husband, the woman with whom he had spent a night on the roadside, the woman from whom he had begged a dance!

My only emotion for the moment was one of overpowering rage, not against her, but against George. He had deceived me as Marjorie had deceived Charlie! I was conscious that my nostrils distended uncomfortably, and that my breathing was audible. I moved my head slowly from side to side, try-

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ing to get rid of the tight, drawn feeling at the back of my neck. My hands clasped ceaselessly on my handkerchief.

Then I made a tremendous effort to control my movements, to keep myself from flying to pieces. I must act, I thought. I must act and bring things to a conclusion once for all. I had been played with enough. The time had come to put an end to what I was suffering, the impositions of my husband, the secret contempt of Marjorie, the gossip of outsiders. I forgot entirely my determination not to make a scene, my resolution to prove my indifference toward Marjorie. I would show everybody that my pride could not be trampled into the dust with impunity.

I stepped to the table and put my finger on the electric bell button. While I waited, I picked up a cigarette, and I remember now that the hand with which I held the alcohol lighter trembled so violently that I had difficulty in igniting the tobacco. I stood with my back toward the conservatory. With a supreme effort I got the cigarette to my lips and inhaled some smoke. As I did it, I wondered in an absurd sort of way why I wanted the smoke.

Jeffries appeared in answer to my ring.

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"Find Mr. Marden," I told him. "Say that I wish to see him at once—here."

The music in the ballroom annoyed me unspeakably. The sound of men's and women's laughter enraged me anew. I hated anybody who could laugh. What did all that dancing and chatter amount to anyway? That was the way with people—they cared always only for themselves. And women's hearts break oftenest in garish scenes, to the sound of music, unnoticed. Our tragedies are not even things of pomp and majestic gloom.

Again I moved my head from side to side, and, as I did so, caught sight of the fan Marjorie had dropped. I stooped down and picked it up, some horrible feeling of loathing creeping over me. I spread it open and looked at it while my tremulous hand got the cigarette to my mouth once more. I tossed away the cigarette, and slowly, with a painful deliberation caused by the stiffness of my fingers, tore the fan to ribbons, rib by rib. With an exclamation of disgust, I dropped it to the floor at my feet.

George came in from the ballroom.

"You sent for me?" he asked coldly.

I did not look toward him at once. I desperately wished to appear calm, to have my

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features under control. I was telling myself that I must seem dignified, mistress of myself, able to deal with the situation thoroughly.

"Sit down," I said, a little tremor in my voice. I took the chair at the right of the table.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in a bored tone.

I answered him imperiously, pointing to the chair Marjorie had left.

"Sit down!"

He sat down and looked across the table at me out of cold, expressionless eyes.

"There are some things I want to know," I said. "I want to ask you a few questions."

"Now?" He seemed a little surprised.

"Yes; now!" I said sharply.

"But our guests," he objected. "Why neglect them?"

"It concerns one of our guests," I told him curtly.

"Very well," he sighed in exaggerated patience, "but let us be quick about it."

"Why is it?" I asked, my voice metallic, "that things have been so different between us for the last year?"

In my battle for self-control, in my anguished effort to keep my brain clear, I was

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so rigid and at the same time so tremulous that I might have been suggestive of a cable about to snap under the strain of enormous weight.

"How do you mean?" he inquired carelessly.

"I mean: what do you see in Marjorie Nesbit?"

"Merely a very pretty woman."

"So you do see that!" I said slowly.

"Look here, Ruth!" he exclaimed angrily. "What the deuce are you trying to make me say?"

"And tell me this," I disregarded his question. "What do you see—what have you ever seen in Marjorie's Nesbit's eyes?"

"What do you think I am—an oculist?"

"Answer me! What have you ever seen in her eyes?"

"Well," he sneered openly, "she has rather pretty eyes, hasn't she—or has she?"

My laugh was scarcely audible, but it was disagreeable to my own ears.

"I am told that men—some men—see more than that," I said, my voice dead of all expression. "In fact, her eyes are, I believe, a curious literature."

He rose, and laughed mirthlessly.

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"I'm going back to the ballroom," he declared.

I, too, rose, and confronted him.

"No; you're not going back!" I told him with harsh swiftness. "I'll tell you what I mean. I mean your shameful and shameless affair with Marjorie Nesbit! I mean I won't submit any longer to this unbearable situation."

He stood silent for a moment, and looked at me, calculating.

"I never heard of such tomfoolery," he said brutally.

"Well, I have!" My voice lost its metallic flatness, and some of my words were shrill. "Everybody else has! Of course, I was the last to hear of it. I heard it from Mary Calhoun—and she heard it from old Mrs. Mason."

"Old women's tales—ridiculous stuff!" he scoffed, still with that maddening sneer.

"I am ridiculous!" I was raging at last, and knew it, and took a savage delight in letting myself go. "That's the truth of the matter. I am made ridiculous by my husband in my own house—all because of a woman whose vulgarity, whose depravity, is such that it outrages the sense of decency in a man like

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Charlie Corcoran. Think of that! I am ridiculous because I've given myself, my soul, to you—and all the time your life is a prayer for the love of another woman!"

"It is impossible to argue with you," he said contemptuously. "Do you mean to say I'm in love with Marjorie Nesbit?"

He started to leave the room.

"Then you persist in lying to me?"

My question was like an insult to a comparative stranger. He turned to me once more.

"Oh, cut it!" he exploded. "If I don't suit you, how the thunder can I help it? You're getting too high and mighty, young woman! What you need is discipline—yes, discipline—something to force you to realize ——"

All the tautness and rigidity that had been in my figure broke up. In a flash I was a supple, writhing creature, my head thrust far toward him, my feet restless, my arms moving jerkily.

"Don't you dare say that to me!" My voice was almost a whisper. "That's what Charlie said to her—physical force! It's the crowning insult—the last affront you will ever put upon me!—Don't stand there like a red-

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stone image. Don't talk to me! Get out of my sight. Leave me alone—alone!"

I stood erect now, my head moving from side to side, my whole body in slight, continual motion. I felt as if my eyebrows were drawn upward toward my hair by some irresistible force. My jaws held together like a vise.

Without a word he turned, and, shrugging his shoulders, left me.

I stood for a moment, leaning against the table and looking vaguely round the room. I remember wondering, in a detached and coldly impersonal way, whether anybody had heard what I had said to George, and then deciding that I did not care if they had.

My glance was caught again by the torn fan. Marjorie! I shuddered. I picked up the fan and, after trailing the rags through my fingers, snapped the ivory ribs one by one. I let it drop again, and, my whole form suddenly crushed by weariness, started slowly toward the conservatory. My one idea was flight, to get away from the merriment in the ballroom, to escape from the people who chattered and laughed. My anger seemed, all at once, miraculously submerged under the weight of an indescribable weariness. It was a peculiar, dead feeling.

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I heard D R's voice and paused at the conservatory door.

"So you see, Miss Calhoun," he was saying as he and Mary came from the ballroom, "I may be very old-fashioned, but that is my theory—that love is everything, that love is life."

Standing in the doorway, I laughed weakly.

"Tell her, D R," I said, "what sort of life! Be sure to tell her that."

It is from that moment that I can not remember what I saw, or did, or said—from that moment until eleven o'clock this morning. My losing consciousness or memory, or whatever it may be called, came without warning. I felt nothing snap in my head. I had no sensation of fainting. My identity was just blotted out from me.

But D R told me a few hours ago all that happened, that is, all he knows.

He and the Calhoun child sat on the leather divan opposite the conservatory door and waited for me to come back. D R thought I had gone in there to look for somebody, and Mary had come to apologize to me for having hurt my feelings!

They had been there, D R told me, for seven or eight minutes when he saw me come out of

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the conservatory. His first glance at me was enough to make him spring toward me. My face was pallid, so that the distorted pattern of my features was hardly noticeable. The blood had left my lips, and the only color in the ghastly whiteness of all my face was the fire of my eyes. I was in a half-crouching position, my chest and shoulders thrust forward, my head strained backward, my arms hanging limply at my sides. My knees wavered beneath me as I half-staggered, half-ran into the room. D R caught me in his arms and held me upright near the table.

When I spoke, it was in a hoarse, dry whisper.

"He's—he's gone out," I said, as if the words hurt me.

Charlie Corcoran's figure flashed along the veranda outside, past the bay window. In a moment he came through the hall door.

"Marjorie—Marjorie Nesbit," I struggled with my news, "is in there"—I indicated the conservatory with a weak wave of my hand—"in there—dead."

D R, with the impulse of the physician, left me leaning against the table and sprang toward the conservatory.

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"Tell me!" Charlie's voice cut in heavily. "What are you saying?"

The question halted D R at the conservatory door.

"*You* tell *us!*" he commanded Charlie.

Charlie, dumbfounded, made no reply.

Music, the song of a lover asking a rose from his lady's hair, sounded from the ballroom. Mary had gone into the conservatory.

"He's gone out—gone out," I moaned.

Without looking at Charlie or D R, I laughed foolishly, emptily, and took two short steps toward the morris chair. I fell against the back of it, and D R came to my help again. I still was laughing foolishly, my head bowed.

"I wish I hadn't found her!" I groaned through my uncanny laughter. "Oh, I wish I hadn't seen her—that's all."

I collapsed in D R's arms. Charlie went with hesitant steps into the conservatory.

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CHAPTER IX

I HAD told them the truth. There in the conservatory, only a few yards from the door opening on the veranda, they found Marjorie, dead. She had been sitting on a rustic bench, and her head was flung back a little, supported by the edge of the back of the bench. There were dark marks on the white skin of her throat. She had been choked to death.

When D R. told me that this morning, I refused to believe it. It was not a matter of my wanting to believe it or disbelieve it. It was simply that it seemed too horrible, too monumental, to admit of belief. I could not get into my mind an adequate representation of what had happened. Marjorie dead—it could not be! How, in so short a time, could death have come to all that loveliness, a loveliness which I had just seen animated by her self-assured, reckless soul?

I said to D R, "There is some mistake. It can't be true."

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I repeated that over and over again, while I sat very still, my limbs heavy as lead, my mind rendered torpid by the immensity of what he had told me. And then, while I was saying it could not be true, I remembered Charlie as I had seen him last night, the look of agony on his face, his hands stretched out in front of him, his long, nervous fingers writhing as if—yes, that was it—as if he crushed her neck in his grasp.

At that, I huddled down in my chair, shaking and jerking like a person with St. Vitus' dance, and I stopped saying it could not be true. I said nothing more about it, but waited for D R to tell me more.

While George had carried me, weak and unprotesting, up to my room, they had put Marjorie into an automobile and rushed with her to the hospital, but all their attempts to revive her had been fruitless. She was quite dead when they first came upon her in the conservatory.

"Now," said D R, after he had told me that, "do you remember anything about what you saw last night—after you went into the conservatory?"

"Nothing," I said, my voice hesitant and thin.

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"What is the first thing you do remember?" he continued.

"Why," I answered, making a great attempt to keep the tremor out of my voice, "just a little while ago when I knew you were standing over me, and ——"

"Nothing before that?" he interrupted sharply.

"Nothing."

He studied me intently a few seconds, and I saw that he was very sorry for me. But he believed me, knew I was not deceiving him.

"Then you must be brave," he cautioned me. "I told you I would give you the full account of what has happened. It is due you. More than that, it is necessary for—for all of us."

"Tell me, D R," I begged. "Anything is better for me than suspense."

"Last night," he began, while he paced slowly up and down in front of me, "after the police had been notified, it was discovered that Corcoran had disappeared. In spite of the most thorough search, no clue whatever to his whereabouts was revealed. The police were at sea—until eight o'clock this morning, when Corcoran, wearing a cap and a long raincoat over his evening clothes, was recognized by an

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officer at the corner of Thirteenth and G Streets. He was on horseback, and the horse had been ridden cruelly hard. Corcoran had been drinking, was intoxicated.

"But he offered no objection when the policeman told him he was wanted at headquarters. He slipped off the horse, called a boy, and paid him to return it to the stable, and went with the officer. At headquarters Major Palmer, chief of police, was about to start for this house. In the hope of incriminating Corcoran, who denied any responsibility for the—the crime, Palmer brought him here.

"When they arrived, I had just come down from your room and had left you resting quietly. You were awake, apparently fully conscious, but you did need rest. I had instructed Miss Keyes, the nurse I called in last night, to see that you were undisturbed.

"Palmer took me aside and asked me to talk to Corcoran with a view to finding out what he knew about the events of last night. At first, I refused. I've helped Palmer in the past a good many times, but it always was with the hope of saving innocent men from punishment. This time he wanted me to fasten guilt upon a suspected man. However, when I had thought

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it over and remembered how closely all this affected you, I consented. You see, I felt the advisability of clearing up the whole matter as soon as possible."

D R was better equipped for the talk with Charlie than Chief Palmer knew. He told me why. Early last evening he and Charlie had engaged in a verbal fencing duel and had just come to the end of it when I, looking for D R, encountered the two standing at the table in the library.

D R had strayed in there for a smoke ten minutes before I found him, and was standing before one of the bookcases near the conservatory door when Charlie, evidently agitated and distressed, came in without seeing him. Still without noticing D R, who had turned quietly to look at him, Charlie went to the reading table and got a cigarette. Without lighting it, he stood balancing himself first on his heels and then on the balls of his feet while he sang, unconscious of what he was doing, the words of the old song:

"After the ball is over, after the break of dawn;
After the dancers' leaving, after the stars are gone,
Many the hearts that are broken if you could read
them all,
Many the hopes that have vanished after the ball!"

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He lit his cigarette, tossing down the match with an impatient gesture, and stood looking toward the wall farthest from D R. His eyes were caught by the picture of Paola and Francesca which hangs between the window and the hall door. He inhaled and blew out a cloud of smoke and stood gazing at the picture, his back to D R, his thumbs thrust into his trousers pockets. He fell to humming the old song again. D R replaced the book on its shelf, the noise attracting Charlie's attention, so that he wheeled about with an expression of annoyance on his face.

"Hello!" D R greeted him, and went toward the table.

"I didn't see you," said Charlie, coming forward to shake hands. They faced each other across the table.

"So it's as bad as that?" queried D R, smiling.

"What's as bad as that?" Charlie asked a little sharply.

"The tragedy of your unrequited love," D R laughed at him. "Why, it's great enough to interfere with your vision. You didn't see me when you came in."

Charlie ground his cigarette into the ash tray.

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"So everybody knows it!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Oh, I don't think so."

"Then how did you know it?"

His anger was real and evident.

"My dear Corcoran," D R half jested, "you've just confessed it to me. You're like all other people. In the songs they sing and the gestures they make and the words that they think are trifles, they convert each minute of their lives into a demonstration of what they have thought or done or what has been done to them. They do it in slips of the tongue even." He laughed at Charlie's irritation. "And I happen to be one of those whose business it is to read the demonstrations."

Charlie turned and paced the length of the room and back.

"Now, honestly, Doctor," he urged impatiently, "how the thunder did you know about it?"

"You forced it into my consciousness. A young man comes into a room, the picture of grief. He thinks he is alone. All his real emotions of the moment come to the surface. He hums disconsolately a song that was popular in his boyhood—boyhood being an extremely impressionable age—about the hearts

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that are broken. Then he loses himself in revery before the picture of the most famous love tragedy in history. What could be simpler?"

"Oh, the dickens!" exclaimed Charlie, and grinned. "You scientists, Doctor, know so much that you get queer ideas. The thing I was worrying about was the punch. It has no punch."

And just then I had hurried in to scold D R for not entertaining my guests. But his little feat of mind-reading had given him information which was valuable this morning as he sat in my front parlor, with the doors closed, and waited for the chief of police to send Charlie to him.

As he told me of the interview, my brain, it seemed to me, worked magically. I could see, as if it existed visibly before me, each scene, every gesture in that colloquy between them. I could hear every word. I lost sight of the library and, while D R talked, watched with careful and breathless intensity every change of expression, every little move, made by each one. I am astonished now that, in my overwrought condition, every word he uttered made such a tremendous impression on me.

When Charlie came into the parlor and

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slammed the door noisily behind him, D R was seated near the big bay window, with his back to it, so that the light fell full upon Charlie all the time. For a little while, he stood in the center of the room, and, without speaking, looked smilingly at D R. The cap he had worn was crushed into the pocket of his raincoat, which hung open, disclosing his evening clothes. It was easy to see that he still was under the influence of drink, and, although he was steady on his feet, his disheveled hair, his flaming eyes, and his unnaturally good-natured smile made him a curious figure.

"Corcoran," D R said kindly, "how are you feeling?"

Throwing back the raincoat, Charlie thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and giggled.

"I'm a dead loss, Doctor," he said, "if I don't believe somebody's going to suspect me of ——"

He became suddenly serious, and added, "Of this awful thing."

"I want to help you," D R said.

It was as if he held out a helping hand to the accused man.

"Sit down."

"No; I'll stand," his tone became slightly aggressive, "Say! What is this?"

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"Didn't Palmer tell you I wanted to talk to you?"

"Oh, yes," he answered carelessly; "but you look so damned solemn."

He took a cigarette and a match from a pocket of his raincoat, and began to smoke.

"It's rather a solemn thing, isn't it?" D R returned impressively.

"Of course, it is, Doctor," he answered, sobering momentarily.

D R looked at him a long time, and said to him with all the earnestness of which he was capable, "You must understand that I want to help you."

Charlie eyed him with owl-like solemnity, and laughed.

"So! It's to be one of those celebrated duels of wit!"

He consumed more time than was necessary in inhaling a volume of smoke.

"Rather, it's to be a duel between wit and whiskey. Go to it! I'm ready."

He had a meaningless look in his eyes, the beginnings of a foolish smile upon his lips.

"Corcoran," D R said with swift directness, "did you kill Marjorie Nesbit?"

The smile faded from Charlie's lips, and his

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eyes became at once expressive of intelligence, alertness.

"I did not," he said evenly. "I swear I didn't. Why, you found out yourself last night I loved her! How's it possible for a man to kill the woman he loves?"

"It has been done," D R answered him quietly.

Charlie's drunken boredom returned.

"You don't say so!" he commented carelessly.

"In the conservatory last night," D R continued the attack, "did Marjorie Nesbit please you or displease you?"

Charlie looked at him warily.

"Why do you hesitate? Tell me; what had Marjorie Nesbit said to you or done to you?"

"Nothing."

But for his burning eyes, he might have been discussing the latest scandal at an afternoon tea.

"That's impossible," the inquisition continued. "She had refused you twenty-four hours before. You were with her alone, first in the library, and then in the conservatory. Now, I ask you: did she please you or displease you?"

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Charlie tossed away his cigarette, put his hands in his pockets, and regarded his questioner gravely.

"Well," he replied, "I'll tell you the truth."

He hesitated, and asked sharply, "You wouldn't repeat anything that reflected on a woman, would you?"

"That's an unnecessary question."

"Well, then," Charlie said with half-drunken earnestness, "I'll tell you, Doctor. I'd just found out that she was not the sort of woman I had thought her. I'd been in love with her. To me she had been everything adorable. And then, in one look from her eyes, I found that she—oh, well, she was no better than another sort of woman."

"So, in that instant, to all intents and purposes, the woman you had loved died?"

"I suppose so," he agreed mechanically.

"And then you went with her into the conservatory?"

"Yes."

D R put the ring of command into his next question.

"What did you do?"

Charlie smiled brazenly.

"I kissed her, of course.—Why not?"

"And then?"

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Charlie lit another cigarette.

"She wanted an ice," he explained. "That's the truth. She wanted an ice, and I went down the steps into the garden and across to the dining room to get it for her. I left her alone, back there in the conservatory, under the roses. My God!" he added, as if the thought appalled him: "A woman like that under the roses!"

D R disregarded his evident disgust.

"But you never got her the ice?"

"No," he answered reluctantly, "I didn't."

"Why didn't you?" The question came imperiously.

Charlie threw away the half-smoked cigarette and went over and sat down on the sofa. Before he spoke, he mopped his brow with his handkerchief. He looked like a man who, although drunk, feels utter weariness.

"Well, to tell you the truth, Doctor, there were so many other people there, and I didn't feel like facing them. I started back, and I can't explain it, but it's the truth—out there in the garden, at the foot of the steps, the idea struck me that something had happened to her. That's why I ran along the veranda and into the library, where you saw me."

D R looked at him thoughtfully.

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"Why did you have the idea that something had happened to her? You no longer loved her, did you?"

"Oh," Charlie answered with a sigh, waving his hands as if the discussion were futile, "I can't explain it."

"But Mrs. Marden said, when she came back into the library, 'He's gone out.' Do you know whether she saw you leave the conservatory?"

"No; I don't."

"Corcoran," D R demanded, "have you told me the truth about this?"

"Absolutely, Doctor."

"I never heard a man break up so many sentences to say he was telling the truth."

Charlie laughed vacantly. He looked wearily at D R and, sighing like a man who yearns for rest, threw himself flat on his back on the sofa, his head on a pillow, his knees crossed at a high angle in the air, his right foot dangling nervously. His gaze was straight toward the ceiling.

"I've evolved a new theory about women, Doctor," he said petulantly, speaking straight up into the air. "None of them will ever get into me again. They're all alike—all exactly alike. The same white arms—same lovely

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hair—same sweet, lying mouths.—Give us a cigarette, will you?"

D R handed him a cigarette and, striking a match, held the flame out for him.

"Thanks!"

D R stood and watched him intently. Lying on the couch, one end of the raincoat trailing on the floor, his evening clothes disarranged, his face heated with the flush of semi-intoxication, he talked on.

"They won't do, Doctor. None of them will ever get into me again. Give one of them a piece of your soul, and you're gone!"

He devoted his attention to the cigarette.

"How about Marjorie?" D R tempted him to talk more.

"My God!" he said, repugnance in his voice. "White arms, lovely hair, sweet mouth—sweet, lying mouth—like all the rest. And she could kiss you as if ——"

He paused to assume a philosophical air.

"However, let the dead bury their dead. Dead kisses are so very dead!" He laughed unpleasantly. "You think I killed her, don't you? But you can't prove it, can you?" He chuckled. "Fortunately, or unfortunately, I went after that ice for her. And fortunately,

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or unfortunately, the only witness of what I did or didn't do is gone. She—he—I've seen —I know that."

He drew a long breath and moved his foot rapidly up and down. D R waited for him to continue.

"All the town thinks I killed her. That's very unpleasant, isn't it? And nobody in the town can prove it. That's more pleasant, isn't it?"

He chuckled again.

"I wonder," he speculated in grotesque solemnity, "whether anybody has tried to figure out whether she killed herself."

"But she was choked to death," D R reminded him.

He lay silent several moments after that, his eyes closed, the lids quivering. Suddenly, as quickly as he had flung himself down, he sprang to a sitting posture and, looking D R in the eye, laughed.

"But you don't seem to want to talk to me!" He shook his finger reprovingly. "You wise old bird! You figure things out of songs and pictures! Tell me, did I do that thing?—Of course, I didn't." He clapped the cap on the back of his head. "I'd be a fine young fool to risk my neck for the same

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white arms and all the rest of it—now, wouldn't I?

"Well," he concluded airily, "I'm glad this talk's over. For the love of a sweet heaven, Doctor, lay off of me on these duels of wits. This one's been enough.—Say! Will you?"

He started toward the door and staggered badly once.

"Corcoran!" D R called to him authoritatively.

He turned and stood still, a grin on his lips.

"You said the only witness of what happened last night was gone."

"I said no such thing!" he snarled, showing fight for the first time. "Damn you! Don't try to put things into my mouth."

"But you certainly said it."

He recovered himself instantly and looked at D R with a smile half-childish and half-silly.

"Oh, did I? I see what you mean. I referred to Marjorie, of course. She's gone, isn't she?"

"But you started to say something about 'he.'"

Charlie flung open the door with a flourish and bowed deeply.

"Did I? No! I said 'she.' You know,

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when a man's drinking, he drops his s's—his s's and his essence of shame."

Without waiting for D R's reply, he went out, slamming the door after he had lunged heavily against it.

"To save my life," D R reported to the chief of police, "I can't tell you whether he's guilty or innocent."

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CHAPTER X

CHIEF PALMER, however, was not satisfied with this indefinite report and set out to secure more evidence by thoroughly searching the house and by questioning the servants. And, while that went on, D R, who had given up all idea of attending to his own affairs for the time being, was talking to George, reassuring him, explaining that the nervous shock of everything that had happened to me would result in no permanent injury to me in any way.

In the meantime, actuated by the physical nervousness which had kept me awake through practically all the night, I had gone down to the library. It was there that Charlie Corcoran found me after his talk with D R.

He came upon me before he knew it, and, when he saw me, stood startled, his cap clutched in his right hand, his graceful, youthful figure swaying back and forth a little. I sank into a morris chair, the same chair that Marjorie occupied last night. I did not seem surprised to

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see him. Without noting particularly the vast anxiety in his eyes, I accepted his presence there as quite the usual thing.

"Ruth—you!" he said in a low, strained voice.

Unaccountably, I was suddenly very tired, and I did not answer him.

The hand with which he held his cap was pressed hard against his breast.

"I thought—thought you were ill," he said, his voice still colored by alarm. "I didn't think—I wasn't trying to hunt you up, you know."

I smiled weakly, although I was not looking at him.

"Were you afraid, Charlie?"

He came to my side, standing between me and the heavy hangings drawn across the conservatory door—so that he might engage my glance.

"Afraid of what?" he inquired hastily.

I gave him a long, level look.

"My telling," I answered him directly, my voice clear in spite of its weakness.

What I said made him wince.

"Telling what, Ruth?"

"What I saw last night."

He held the cap in front of him now in

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both hands and studied the visor of it intently.

"I'm sorry," he sympathized, "awfully sorry you're so knocked out—honestly."

He continued to stare at the visor of the cap while I looked at him.

He did not glance toward me as he added: "And, of course, you wouldn't say anything—to anybody." He flipped the visor nervously with the fingers of his right hand. "I wouldn't advise it, now, at any rate—would you?"

There fell a pause, broken only by the rapping of his fingers on the stiff visor.

"Are all the doors closed?" I asked.

He looked around.

"Yes, all," he answered.

He hung on the thin edge of suspense.

"You wouldn't say anything — really — would you, Ruth—anything at all?"

His pleading amounted to a command.

"I ought to," I said flatly.

At last his alarm was unconcealed.

"Ought to!" he exclaimed.

He thrust his cap back into the pocket of the raincoat.

I sighed and looked at him again a long time.

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"But I won't."

"Ah-h-h!" his exclamation was all gratitude.

Swaying a little, he stood and watched me narrowly. There was a line between his eyebrows, and his jaws were hard-set.

"Charlie," I elaborated, "I'm not going to say anything—to anybody."

"I see," he said. "That's fine—very."

"I think that's all," I dismissed him.

He hesitated a moment.

"Goodby, Ruth," he said in almost a whisper.

He had taken one step away from me when, as if animated anew, I sat bolt upright in the chair.

"No! It isn't all!" I said, speaking in a stronger, disagreeable voice.

He returned to my side.

"What's the use of my lying about it—pretending I'll keep my mouth shut from charitable motives, because of mercy? I'm not doing it to save you!"

He looked about him wildly.

"I'll be honest with you." My voice shrilled weakly. "I'm glad—*glad* you killed her!"

Charlie uttered a cry that came from deep down in his throat.

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"Don't! Don't, for God's sake, say that!" he begged me.

"Why not?" I asked coolly. "There's nobody to hear."

I paused a moment, and added, "I want to be honest with you, Charlie. I want to tell you what I think, because I can't help thinking it now. I tell you, I'm glad she's dead—glad ——"

He took one of my hands in both of his and urged me sternly, "Don't say that again! Don't say it, Ruth. Somebody might hear—might come in! You ——"

I laughed without merriment, and withdrew my hand from his.

"But I'm not going to tell," I said. "I promise, Charlie. Wild horses couldn't drag it out of me. She ruined my life. And you did me a favor—you got rid of her. Ah, don't you see?"

He fell back a step or two until he was almost against the hangings of the conservatory door.

"I had wished her dead, and, when I saw you choke her—oh, that way"—I raised my hands and imitated in the air what he had done—"I knew I was glad—glad she was dead. I'm glad now!"

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He caught my hand again and cried out huskily, "Don't! Won't you keep quiet? For my sake, let me go!"

He flung out his left arm in a forbidding gesture, and his hand struck the hangings over the conservatory door. He did not move it. His arm stiffened, like an inanimate thing, the hand still against the hangings. Terror masked his face.

"What's the harm?" I asked in weak indifference. "You know I'm your friend. I won't tell."

"Good God! You *have* told!"

As he said that, he dragged the heavy hangings to the floor, disclosing Palmer, who had stood between the curtains and the door. Palmer kicked away the hangings piled about his feet, and put his hand on Charlie's shoulder.

"I guess that's enough for today," said the chief of police.

"Damn you!" said Charlie, mechanically buttoning his raincoat, and added, "Let's go."

A few minutes later D R, having got a description from Chief Palmer of this scene between Charlie and me, hurried into the library. He found me leaning back in the chair, a smile on my tired face, as if I slept.

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When he bent over me, I opened my eyes and looked up at him—and knew where I was, knew that I was *real,* alive.

"Ruth," he said firmly, "tell me—what are you doing here?"

Involuntarily, I listened for the dance music. Then I was conscious of the daylight.

"Why—why, I don't—what is the matter, D R?" I asked.

And then I was terribly frightened without in the least knowing why.

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CHAPTER XI

AFTER D R had told me—just as I have written it down here—everything I did and everything that happened during my state of unconsciousness, my dominant emotion was terror caused by the memory of my own suffering, all that I had suffered, and all that I would go on suffering. I was not even particularly struck by the tragic way in which Charlie had walked into Chief Palmer's trap and met betrayal at my hands.

"Oh, I'm so sorry for myself, D R!" I said, with a moan. "I should be weeping over Marjorie and Charlie. I should be weeping because of what I've done to Charlie. But I don't at all—I can't!"

"Why are you so sorry for yourself?"

He was all tenderness.

"I suffer so."

"How?"

"I'm afraid—so afraid! It isn't my body that suffers. It's my heart—and my head. I don't think things as I should, D R. Really,

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I don't. It isn't only about Marjorie and Charlie. It's about lots of things. My thoughts torture me so!"

"For a year you have felt this way, haven't you?" he asked gently.

"Yes."

"I knew it—and you wouldn't come to me for help."

"I was afraid—afraid to tell anybody how I felt, what I thought—such thoughts, D R!"

"And now?"

"Now I will do anything, tell anything—if you can help me! If you don't help me, D R, I shall go insane. Really, I shall."

"No," he assured me; "you won't do that."

"I know now," I sobbed, "what they mean when they talk in the Bible about being possessed by evil spirits. I know now!"

He stopped his pacing to and fro a moment and looked down at me compassionately.

"Let me explain just what your trouble is," he suggested. "I think it will lead to ending all your pain and distress. You are, of course, a neurotic. One is neurotic if one has had an ugly, or unbearable, or revolting experience in one's childhood—something that one could not adjust to one's ideals and one's opinions of how things should be and people should act.

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If one's childhood is ever wounded in this way, it means that one is handicapped in later life in meeting any trying event or great disappointment or devastating sorrow. One's moral strength is cut down tremendously, and, when the strain of untoward events comes, one is apt to break down. That is what has happened to you."

"And you can help me in that!"

I was frankly incredulous, disappointed. I could remember no such event in my youth as he described.

"If you will let me," he said. "We must work together in order to find out every smallest thing, as well as every biggest thing, that has made it possible for you to suffer so, everything in your adult years and everything in your childhood. There are bothering you so many things which you, of yourself and unaided, do not and can not recall now in any way."

Then he explained to me how I would have to tell him all my thoughts and aspirations, my entire view of life and its problems.

"We shall embark upon the sea of memory," he said, with his reassuring smile, after my promise to tell him everything, "our minds made up that we shall not be dismayed

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by anything we may discover during our voyage."

"And if we do this," I asked, "shall I be able to recall everything that happened to me last night and this morning?"

"I believe so—I'm quite sure of it," he said. "This analysis of your soul, psychoanalysis, is intended to bring back to your conscious mind all the troubling, harassing things you can't remember. Once they are brought back, you can deal with them effectively.—Yes. There is no reason why you should not recover your memory of the events of last night."

He looked at me with his keen, kindly glance.

"Why are you so anxious to do that?"

"Because I don't believe Charlie killed Marjorie," I said emphatically; "and I want to find out how and why I ever accused him of such a crime."

"Why don't you believe he killed her?"

D R's questions are so direct and compelling!

"I can't explain it—except that I know him so well; and what I know of him counterbalances anything I may have said while I was not responsible for my acts or words."

He walked the length of the room with-

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out speaking. Another thought frightened me.

"I shall have to testify about it, I suppose."

"Don't worry about that now," he advised. "I have arranged it so that you will not be called for the inquest. Wait until an indictment is returned and the trial date is set."

"And then?"

"Tell the truth—you remember nothing. So far as you can recall, you saw nobody in the conservatory, and you said nothing to Corcoran here this morning."

D R is so comforting. I can not put it into words, but his very presence breathes comfort. He lives so entirely according to his simple creed, which is that trouble comes fast enough and that the bravest thing any of us can do is to meet it squarely, face to face, when it does come.

"How long," I asked, "will your—your treatment of me last?"

"It generally is rather long," he answered. "I shall not try to deceive you about it, Ruth. Sometimes it takes months, sometimes weeks. We can work hard and do our best—that is all."

After that, he would not let me talk any more, but made me come up to my room, in-

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sisting that I was worn out, exhausted, in reality ill. In that, he was mistaken. I feel incredibly strong, have felt so all day and all night—it is midnight now, and I have been writing with feverish energy for nearly eleven hours!

It did not even upset me when George came up here to my room a few minutes after I had left D R. My feeling toward him was instinctive antagonism, and I resented with peculiar intensity his assumption, all too evident in his expression, that he could be of genuine comfort to me in this difficulty, this crisis. There had been so many other difficulties when he had not even attempted to sympathize with me! And since, in the treachery of his self-interest, he had failed me so often and had built up within me the habit of not trusting to him for help, how could he think I would need him now, merely because this was something which affected him and the publicly known events in his home?

That was what threaded my thoughts, as he stood before me: how his self-interest had made him traitor to me! There can be no middle ground, no neutrality, in marriage. One lives with a man and grows each day closer and closer to him, or one lives in his house while

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one's soul withdraws from him further and further. The life is a thing of strong, warm sympathy, the warmth making everything beautiful, or it is a thing of secret, hot rebellion, hidden flames that shrivel and twist and harden one's heart. And I had drawn very far away from George.

It was due to his self-interest that he did not appreciate how far apart we were. He had made the distance between us quite wide and impassable. His life could be lived right now with me entirely out of it, and he would feel no inconvenience, no lack. His polo with the army officers from Fort Myer, his devotion to bridge at the club, his enthusiasm over golf, his popularity as a raconteur and entertainer at stag affairs—all these things, with his business of looking after his property, his apartment houses, his dwelling houses, and his stocks, have become his world, a world in which I figure as an individual who can be made happy and kept as an ornament for his house by the mere process of his writing in his check book!

He has always been so patently self-sufficient in an emotional way. I have never seen into him, never known what went on further back in his head than the surface of his eyes. For three years I was continually rushing out

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to him—he never came to meet me. I was always trying to translate to him my ideas of what a home should be—he always refused to be translated. I sought again and again to show him as plainly as I could what I needed in little things, the great big little things, intimate touches and words and thoughts—he consistently failed to read the banners flung forward by my soul.

Inevitably, I had been reduced to disappointments, secret tears, unspeakable amazements, hidden wounds. My soul, the real love part of me, had become like a soldier fighting to the last against terrific odds, wounded, borne down, dazed by a multitude of blows, struggling on, and yet indifferent to pain or even death.

That, in some measure, was why, when he came to me in my great need, he might as well have been a stranger, was in fact a stranger who, diverted for a moment by the shocking things of the night from his outside routine and his little "amusements" with the Mrs. Tarones of his life, did "the proper thing" now and offered me "help." It was with a conscious effort that I kept back a bitter laugh.

When there is constraint or any lack of naturalness between husband and wife, their

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dialogues in moments of stress are always either absurd or absurdly commonplace.

He closed the door and stood a few steps from me, the image of uncertainty. Because he was so little used to vital things between us, he reminded me of a child gasping with one foot thrust into a cold bath.

"Are you well enough to be out of bed?" he asked at last, unconsciously jingling the keys and loose coin in his pocket.

"Quite," I returned icily, and sat down near the window.

"I thought—I hoped I might be of help," he explained, as he might have offered assistance to a strange woman hurt in an automobile accident.

"I need only a doctor's help—D R's," I said.

He came nearer and tried desperately to force some kind of ardor into his tone.

"Don't you need a husband's help? Don't you need my love?"

I turned toward him impatiently.

"George, for heaven's sake don't be ridiculous! D R is going to help me. It would only bore you to be bothered with me while I'm so—so nervous and unstrung."

"Bother me!"

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"You know it—quite well."

He jingled the keys again.

"Doyle tells me you've forgotten having been in the conservatory last night and having talked to Charlie this morning."

"I have," I said, "but why discuss it?"

"It does seem to me," he objected, "you and I ought to get together on this thing. It's not a joke exactly. Murder has been committed in this house, our house. We must clear it up."

"How?"

"Look here, Ruth," he said explosively, "you don't think you can get Charlie off, do you? You can't think you can protect him by refusing to confide in me!"

"Why should I want to protect him?" I retorted indifferently.

"Then, what's the matter?"

"George, leave me, will you?" I dismissed him. "You only annoy me with your useless suppositions. I am in D R's hands. There's only one thing you can do for me—don't bother me, keep away from me for days; oh," I exclaimed with momentary vehemence, "for months!"

"Very well," he agreed instantly, "if it's what you really want."

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"Exactly what I want," I said in sharp finality.

That ended the interview.

After he had gone, I could not help thinking of all the tragic grief I would have avoided if only he had been different. I think of it now, here in the middle of the night, I, a tortured being afraid to go to sleep while outside all the city sleeps as if nothing at all had ever happened to hurt anybody anywhere!

But it is after twelve o'clock, and I must try to sleep. I will call Miss Keyes.

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CHAPTER XII

ONE other thing I must set down here before I sleep, because in some indistinct, half-felt way it does give me a little comfort. It may be only because of the beauty of the words.

When D R was talking to me this morning—yesterday morning, really—he said:

"The things done to little children may make them in later years commit crimes or regard the crimes of others with too much charity.

"I do not find it hard to believe that Benedict Arnold was a traitor because in his childhood he heard, through some half-open door, his father saying strange, ugly things for money—or that Judas bartered away his soul because, as a little boy, he saw his own mother sell her scarlet lips for gold.

"When you are a child, your mind is a clean tablet ready for the graver, a blank canvas waiting for the master hand; and the beautiful picture imprinted upon it at four may be re-

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produced as a lovely song at thirty—the ugly scene as a terrible tragedy at forty."

What a tremendous theory that is! But it reminds me at once of what the tramp said to Marjorie:

"All my past is on my back. It is a tremendous weight, like an avalanche, that continually thrusts me onward and downward to—what? . . . When one has done many things and thought many things, one is no longer free. One will go on. . . ."

Practically the same thing, the identical idea, from a tramp educated by bitter experience and from a scientist voicing the teachings of psychology and philosophy!

But it is a tremendous theory, nevertheless. If one accepts it unreservedly, one is tempted to throw up one's hands and deny responsibility for everything. Perhaps, that is why it comforts me now—a little. It is a great idea and dangerous! But all big ideas concerning the emotions are dangerous to us women, I think. After all, aren't we merely grown-up little girls, with all the violent likes and dislikes of little girls?

A woman, I think, can never be conservative in her likes and dislikes. She never entertains a suspicion, for in her mind a suspicion be-

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comes overnight a fact—she can not endure half-tones in either thought or feeling. Likewise, she can not think another person merely tolerable—the other person is invariably either to be welcomed into her inner circle of warm affection or to be thrust into the outer world of cold indifference. We women rush at things or flee from them. We never stand between.

But D R has told me he will explain to me, as the days go by, how my childhood incapacitated me for dealing adequately and definitely with the Mrs. Tarones and the Marjories of my life. And, in doing that, he is to put me in such possession of myself that the cloud which hides my knowledge of what happened there in the conservatory will be lifted.

How will he accomplish all this, all this and the greater achievement of giving me peace of mind, courage, happiness even? That is what I ask myself repeatedly—how? If I could only understand! He will begin with me tomorrow. Tomorrow there are to be, then, two inquests, one over the body of Marjorie Nesbit, one over the soul of Ruth Marden.

And some day, as a result of both of them, I am to know why and how I have done things which have resulted in Charlie's going to prison

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and my husband's being estranged from me! Everything is so mixed and ruined. The inappropriateness, the incongruity of things, a murder committed in my home—sensation, scandal, horrible publicity! They are simply things that *do not belong,* things that *are not done,* things I never thought could touch me or any of the people I know.

How can D R save for me anything that is worth while in life? I wish I were unable to doubt, but I do—terribly.

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CHAPTER XIII

LAST night was wretched. When D R told me I was exhausted and ill from what I had been through, he was right. If Miss Keyes had not been with me, I do not know what I would have done. I was so nervous, so perfectly unable to hold myself together, that at last she gave me something to make me sleep. I like her much—she is so entirely my ideal of what a nurse should be, doing only what I want done and insisting on nothing I dislike!

And today I have been shown the path leading to a new life—if only I can follow it!

D R came to see me a few minutes past one o'clock, and I received him up here in my writing room. This is where I shall see him each day. It is quiet, and away from everything, and the comfortable chairs, the open fire, and the sense of it all being my own personal atmosphere will help me in my efforts to do the things he wants me to do.

I met him today with the question that was

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uppermost in my thoughts last night: "How are you going to help me, D R—exactly how?"

"First," he said, "you must tell me exactly how you have suffered, exactly *what* you have suffered."

I began to tell him, and immediately discovered how hard it was. I could not find words that would express suitably or satisfactorily what I had endured, what I am enduring now. It is surprising how, when one has decided to lay bare one's soul and to have done with reservations and ambiguities and the pitiful subterfuges one has been accustomed to use to soothe one's hurt pride or to hide one's faults—it is surprising then how hard it is to put things into plain language. The various shades of feeling, the high colors of agony, the different degrees of pain, although they may be felt and realized in terms of tears, elude one's powers of description.

"For a year," I said, "I've suffered unspeakably. I've felt a mortification for which there was no redress, a bitterness I was afraid to utter, a scorn on which I would not act, a misery for which I wept only in secret; a wild, desperate rage which I tried to repress. I have wanted to die; oh, I've longed so to die.

"And I have wanted to go away. I don't

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mean simply to leave George. I have wanted to disappear entirely, never to see again any of my friends, any of the people I know. I wished to lose myself, to establish a new identity, without any of the old ties, in another part of the world. I have been desperate. I've felt like a hunted thing, with nowhere to turn—miserable day and night—oh, so miserable!"

"I know—know so well," he encouraged me. "Now, try to be more specific. Tell me the details, can't you?"

He was looking at me with infinite understanding in his eyes. Somehow, I believed then that he would not blame me for anything I could tell him. He had only the desire to help. That enabled me to go on.

"There have been times when I couldn't even cry. The tears wouldn't come. I was so unhappy and lonely, and yet couldn't cry. That always terrifies me. It reminds me of the man in Dante's hell—the one whose face had been encased in ice so that he might never have the consolation of tears. And I've been tortured by ideas. I mean an idea would come to me, and I couldn't get it out of my head. Sometimes it was merely foolish. Sometimes it was painful. Sometimes—oh, D R, how

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can I say it?—sometimes it was disgusting, low, perfectly disgusting."

"I know," he said again. "That is the agony of the fixed idea. It is torturing."

"And again I've felt as if I would do things in spite of myself, things that I didn't want to do at all, horrible things—like insulting people gratuitously, or laughing at sorrow. I have done it—I've insulted people, and I have laughed at people's suffering."

"That, too, I understand," he nodded his head slowly; "compulsions."

"All that has made me afraid—afraid! I'm always afraid I shall do something or say something in spite of myself, things that are not like the real me at all. I'm no longer mistress of myself. That's why I say I'm losing my mind."

He got up from his chair, and, with his hands behind him, began to pace to and fro, between me and the fire.

"As I told you," he said, "you are neurotic. But you mustn't think that so terrible. We are all a little neurotic. It is a question of nerves. Only in your case the neurotic condition has become so bad that you must have help. You must be shown how you can control yourself.

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"Somebody has said that we all are born heirs to the stars, but, before we have gone very far, we fall into a pit. That is, the storm and stress of life drags us back, drags us down, and we can not realize our ideal of happiness and content.—What do you think has kept you from realizing your ideal happiness?"

"George," I returned unhesitatingly. "I don't trust him. For more than a year, he has made the thought of love an ugly, despicable thing."

"We will come back to that—many times. Now, you see, having met this obstacle to your happiness, you haven't dealt with it frankly and fully. As you say, you decided there was no redress for your mortification. You didn't give voice to your bitterness. And you came to the point where you wanted to die, or run away, anything to escape your tragic disappointment. It is this state of mind which accounts for many of the 'mysterious disappearances' the newspapers report."

He paused before he added:

"I want to be very clear about this: the neurotic who comes to grief does so because she refuses to fight out her battles. She flees from realities. Let me put it this way: all neurotics, men or women, are those people who, faced by

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painful problems, throw up their hands and give up the battle of life. That is, they are in a sense morally timid—moral cowards. Do you see?"

"You mean we don't make the best of things?"

"Practically that, but it is more than that. After you decided it would do no good to talk it over with George or anybody else, you naturally withdrew into yourself, tried to solve your problems alone, tried to be all-sufficient unto yourself. Of course, that was impossible. No one is sufficient unto one's self.

"You demonstrated that very clearly, with your search for happiness outside your home, your excited indulgence in all sorts of amusements, your outbreaks of hilarity, your attacks of gloom and depression. So many women do the same thing. And the moment one turns from one's loved ones and says, 'I don't care; let things go to smash; I'll find happiness elsewhere,' just then one heads for tragedy.

"Your viewpoint is twisted by your brooding, or by your cynical levity, or by the grief which you continually exaggerate by dwelling on it. Your thoughts run away from you, carry you hither and thither; you become the prey of fixed ideas and obsessions. Running

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away from disappointment is just as demoralizing as running away from an enemy. Cowardice always entails the most costly kind of suffering."

It was queer that I did not resent what he said. If anybody else had said it to me, I would have resented it. I would have been angry with him had I not realized so fully that his one aim was to help me. Strangest of all was the mental attitude I had toward this dissection of myself, my motives, my conduct. Thanks to his earnestness, his loving kindness, I was able to look at myself with something of clarity, some little measure of criticism.

"I can realize," I said, "how I've been unable to find happiness away from normal life and normal things. I may be able to convince myself that I was cowardly in not trying to persuade George he was unfair to me. But why did I run away from the fight? Why did I have the cowardly impulse? No one chooses to be a coward."

"Every coward is made a coward in childhood," he answered without the slightest hesitation. "Tell me: what kind of a childhood and young girlhood did you have?"

"It was," I answered bitterly, "a thing of sackcloth and ashes. You know about my

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mother and father, how I loved him, how he died when I was ten, how irritable my mother was, and how strict she was with me, of how much pleasure she deprived me. I say this although I loved her dearly, and she did what she thought was best for me. But I wouldn't like to live through my childhood again."

"Ah!" he exclaimed with quick sympathy. "You have come back to what I said: in your childhood the foundation was laid for the sorrow and discomfort you now feel. In fact, I do not think I go too far when I say unhappy marriages, divorces, and all the tragedies of domestic life are formed, in miniature, in one's childhood. You ran away from your problems because your troubled childhood established in you the habit of mental flight, of not being able to satisfy yourself as to why this or that had to be or had to happen."

"And what am I to do?"

"We are going to bring back to you the memory of all the things that hurt you as a child. And those, taken with these later annoyances and irritants, we shall be able to discuss and deal with effectively when once you have remembered them.

"The trouble is, we flatter ourselves we have forgotten many of the things that wounded us.

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As a matter of fact, we never forget. The things we have thrust into our subconscious minds with ruthless hands because we did not want to think about them, come back in disguised forms and strike down our calm, our mental efficiency."

"And if I am able to remember them, to bring them back, they will not trouble me any more?"

"Exactly. What you are today is the product of all the things you have thought and felt and done in all the past hours of your life. You are a nervous wreck now because you thought and felt wrongly, dealt inadequately with some of the things that came into your life. We will bring them into the light of reason, and, when we have discussed them and deprived them of the power of worrying you further, you will be strong, courageous, able to take hold of life and really mold it 'closer to the heart's desire.'"

"But how can I remember all these things?" I urged. "How can I ever accomplish it?"

"Through the proper use of your dreams."

"My dreams, D R! How?" My incredulity returned in all its force.

"I shall analyze them," he said, disregarding my unbelief. "Your dreams are but the rec-

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ord, the record in hieroglyphics, of your past troubles. They tell in symbols, a beautiful symbolism as you will find, exactly wherein you have been hurt and sent stumbling and timid into the battle of life."

"I suppose," I remarked, still doubtful, "you can read my dreams."

"It is only necessary," he said, "for you to tell me what the things in your dreams remind you of. I will explain the symbolism and the meaning to you as we proceed."

"I will do my share," I said humbly.

"Then," he assured me cheerfully, "we need have no fear as to the result. You must trust that to me."

As he was leaving, after I had repeated to him what I wrote last night about my unhappiness with George, he said:

"Be ready tomorrow to tell me any dreams you may have tonight."

"Why, I forgot!" I cried in dismay. "I never dream."

"Oh, yes, you do," he said with conviction. "Everybody has dreams every night, but not everybody has the habit of remembering them."

I wonder if everybody does dream! And I wonder how I am to get happiness as a result of my dreams. While he talked to me, I felt

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comforted, assured. Now that he is no longer here, I am all doubts, and indecisions, and fears. How are my dreams to give me peace, or make me happy with George? Or does he mean that I shall be happy by leaving George? And when?

Most particularly I wonder how my dreams are to make me remember what I saw in the conservatory and why I accused Charlie Corcoran of a murder I did not even know I had witnessed!

It all seems so hopeless and far away and useless, this seeking, by conversation, to regain the mastery of my own soul—and to establish the innocence or guilt of Charlie. Do I *want* to remember what I saw Charlie do in the conservatory? It might be better, after all, not to remember. Even if he is guilty, it may be just as well for me not to remember. I do not want to see him punished.

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CHAPTER XIV

SEVERAL hours after D R left I read the afternoon newspapers. He allows me to do this. When I asked him about it, he said:

"I think it would be better for you to know what is happening than to sit here imagining all sorts of things. You see, what we are trying to do in this work is to enable you to face facts."

The rest of my life he has permitted me to arrange as I see fit. For the present, I spend my time in my bedroom and writing room, seeing nobody but Miss Keyes, not even Amanda, my cook, who really is also my housekeeper. I have not seen George since yesterday. I shall not see him for a long time. I can not stand it—and it would do no good. In a few days I shall take a ride in the car, with Miss Keyes.

She is a blond little thing, always cool and self-possessed. Her sureness of movement, her quickness, her quietness, and her gift for never irritating me have pleased me immensely. I know I shall like her more and more. That

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is, I shall be able to endure having her near me. I feel that I never want to *like* anybody really again. In the end, to like anybody is merely to doom oneself to final disappointment!

The inquest was held this morning. D R had given his testimony there before he came to me, and he did not mention it while he was here! Mary Calhoun was a witness—and the policeman who arrested Charlie on the street—and Chief Palmer, who related the conversation he had heard between Charlie and me. Charlie did not testify.

And now he is in jail "to await the action of the grand jury. The prosecuting attorney plans to bring him to trial the latter part of November." The last of next month, then, he will go to trial for his life. In the meantime, he is in jail, in a common cell, lodged with outcasts and riffraff, with nothing to do but gaze at the walls of his narrow cell. Charlie, who was forever on the go, forever full of fun and life, dancing, driving his gray roadster at incredible speeds, laughing his way through life—Charlie, handsome, rich, without a care on earth.

The verdict of the coroner's jury was that Marjorie came to her death "at the hands of Charles Tevis Corcoran."

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Ever since I read that—and it is now late at night—I have been seeing Charlie's hands as they were before he and Marjorie went into the conservatory—strong, writhing hands which, in pantomime, crushed her throat. I have seen those hands, and there have flashed through my mind hundreds of times the words "at the hands of Charles Tevis Corcoran." I can't get rid of his hands, even while I am writing. They dance before me, leap at me out of the dark, set my brain to whirling like a mill-wheel. Those are the kinds of things that make me suffer so. It is worse than being haunted by a ghost. I can not escape. I know that, when I go to bed, I shall lie there in the dark and see those hands and repeat to myself, like a mental litany, "at the hands of Charles Tevis Corcoran."

Another afternoon paper printed this:

"Mrs. George Marden, the well known young society matron, was not a witness at the inquest. Although she will be ultimately the star witness of the prosecution against Corcoran, all idea of summoning her today was given up when Doctor Francis P. Doyle, the eminent neurologist, assured the chief of police that she was suffering from a complete nervous breakdown and was unable to take the stand.

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" In this connection, there was a rumor going the rounds this afternoon that Mrs. Marden, who was an intimate friend of Corcoran's, will never testify against him. The report is that Mrs. Marden claims to have no recollection of what she saw in the conservatory on the night of the murder or what she said to Corcoran in the hearing of Chief Palmer.

" When Doctor Doyle was questioned about this alleged aphasia on the part of Mrs. Marden, he refused to make any comment.

" Chief Palmer, however, was more communicative. He said:

" ' I do not believe Mrs. Marden suffered any such aphasia, nor do I believe that such an excuse will be put forward by her or her friends to prevent her testifying at the trial. It is merely a wild rumor. An aphasia which is as ' convenient ' as that was, lasting only long enough to cover up the commission of the crime and her incriminating Corcoran, would be ridiculous.

" ' I can realize Mrs. Marden's desire to protect the accused. It is natural in her first shocked horror as a result of the crime. However, there is no cause for worry. Mrs. Marden will testify. You can be sure of that. This is not an age when justice can be thwarted

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by cooked-up excuses simply because a witness happens to like a criminal.' "

How do such things get into print so soon? Who could have told a reporter about my condition? Is it a guess, some wild imagining that happens to strike the truth, or has the chief of police found out about me? Nobody knew of it except D R and George. Has George confided in somebody, and has that somebody betrayed his confidence? Or did D R have to tell the chief of police?

After all, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that this is what everybody is saying about me, that I am lying, that I am trying to protect Charlie, and that the attempt is absurdly weak. So, all things considered, I must remember! I must win back to a real recollection of what I saw and said. Not to remember will do Charlie no good. I have sent him to the scaffold, as things stand now. My only chance of saving him is to remember, to be able to say that he did *not* kill Marjorie and that what I said to him yesterday morning in the library was nothing but the mad raving of a woman temporarily out of her mind.

That, of course, puts another burden upon me. To confess that I was out of my mind!

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What woman cares to do that? But I must. I must!

I believe Charlie is innocent. Yes, I sincerely believe that. But why does the vision of his strong, writhing hands haunt me so? Why did they seem so ready and eager to crush, to choke? Why do they float before my eyes and torment me? Why, when D R told me Charlie had been arrested, was my first idea the recollection of those writhing, strong, eager fingers? Perhaps, it is because I am so weak nervously. It must be that.

Charlie did not kill her. I know him too well. He did not. And I must remember all about it, so that he will be saved. I am sure on that point now. I want to remember all about it. D R and I must work, work, work every day so that, in the end, I may be able to take the stand and tell the truth. I do not fear the ordeal of testifying if only I can help him, if only I can undo some of the misery I have made him bear.

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CHAPTER XV

LAST night I slept the dead sleep of utter exhaustion, except that once I awoke and sat up in bed terrified for the moment. I had had a dream—one which, in spite of its grotesqueness, filled me with genuine horror and made my heart flutter and my breath come and go in gasps.

When D R came, I told him the dream, I who had been so sure twenty-four hours before that I never dreamed.

"I don't think it can mean anything," I said with a short, deprecatory laugh, "but this is it:

"I dreamed I saw George running down a long, narrow road. The road had low, thick bushes on each side of it. He was running after a little curly-haired boy, and in some way I knew that he intended to kill the child. He was about to catch the child and kill it when a tall Indian stepped out of the bushes and handed me a hatchet, or a tomahawk. I threw the hatchet at George and struck him just as he was about to grasp the child's hair. Then I was so horrified, I awoke."

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D R, pacing in his slow, restful way to and fro in front of me, nodded approvingly.

"That is an excellent dream," he declared encouragingly.

He went to my desk and wrote one or two lines on a piece of paper which he slipped into an envelope. Then he put the envelope on the mantel, leaning it against a vase.

"Now," he began, turning to me again, "the great thing we must remember is that every dream expresses and fulfils a wish entertained consciously or unconsciously by the dreamer. In discussing all your dreams, in analyzing them and finding out what they mean, we must keep that in mind: to discover the wishes, the longings, wrapped up in them.

"And the only way we can do this, and the only way you can recover from your neurosis and remember the affair about Corcoran is this: Whenever I ask you a question about what you are reminded of by a word or a sentence or a fact in the dream, you must answer me immediately. The thought must spring instantly from your brain to your lips. You must not edit it or qualify it or hold it back. No matter how absurd or how irrelevant may be the idea brought up, you must give it to me."

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"Is that all?" I asked, thinking how easy it would be.

"Yes; that, and the things I may find it necessary to say to you by way of explanation as we proceed."

"I can do that," I agreed readily.

"You can if you will be brave," he cautioned me.

"Now," he pursued, pausing in his walk and looking at me intently, "what are you reminded of by a little child?"

I looked at him for fully ten seconds without opening my lips.

"You said you would tell me," he persuaded. "What has become of the thought that came into your mind?"

"Oh, D R," I answered, distressed, "do I have to tell you that?"

"Everything," he said, but with wonderful tenderness.

I hesitated, struggling with myself at the beginning of the process of laying bare my soul.

"When you said 'little child,'" I forced myself to the words, "it reminded me that, ever since I've been married, I have wanted children of my own."

"And George?" he asked in a low voice.

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I fought with myself again.

"He—he," I said, the words coming in a whisper, "has never wanted them."

"Tell me all about it," he urged gently.

It was terribly hard. I felt ashamed, humiliated, and, coupled with that, was an indignant wondering as to how all this could account for any of my present suffering. But somehow, stumbling, hesitant and abashed, I told the story which I had thought for years nobody, not even George, could ever drag from me, the story of my lost happiness, of my grief because I could have no children without incurring the displeasure of my husband!

To the happy mother, with her children at her knee, this might seem silly and impossible. But to those others, the childless married women, the women who have had no children simply because their husbands loved them as women and not as potential mothers, it must ring true, bitterly true. So many of them have gone through that anguish, an anguish all the greater because it was not expected. They know the agony of it. They know! I have seen it on their faces, the shadow of sweet hopes denied, lovely visions unrealized. And I know!

It all came back to me as, stirred to clear

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memory by the promptings of a jumbled-up dream, I told D R about it. I told him all, my happy engagement to George, my dreams of a home and curly-haired babies, my feeling on my wedding night that I was about to begin with this man the real earnest business of living, my shy, and yet eager, welcoming of his caresses; my surrender, in a storm of passion made beautiful by love, to him who would be the father of my children. And then I had to tell him of what George had said that very night—his not wanting children, his wanting me just as I was.

D R had sat down across the hearth from me.

"And what did you think of that?" he asked.

"Oh, at first," I said, "I was numb with grief. It did not seem real or true. But, of course, I was in love with my husband, and I wanted to please him. I—I never argued it with him again. I—D R, I couldn't—don't you see? I just went on living for months with that dull ache down in my heart, that thought in my mind that I had been struck a cruel blow, been robbed of the greatest sweetness of life. After a while, eight or nine months, I guess, all that wore away. I for-

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got. I made myself forget. I wouldn't think of it any more. If George would be less happy with children, they were impossible. That was all. I stopped worrying, and turned to other things."

D R got up and walked slowly back and forth.

"A neurotic," he explained, "is one who has sacrificed her ideals needlessly and refused to meet her destiny. She does not live naturally. If one fulfilled as nearly as possible all one's ideals and did what nature intended one to do, one could never be neurotic.

"You see, you are to be cured, enabled to regain possession of your mind by finding out how you have crushed your ideals and how best you may realize your destiny to the full.

"Being a woman, your destiny was to have children. That is the destiny of all of us, men and women, particularly women. There is only one substitute for it, for this great creative business of reproduction, and that is important and creative work. Love and work are the only things worth while in life—absolutely. And they are worth while simply because they are creative. The ideal state is to have a family and to do some other creative work also, but it is seldom that a woman can make

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work a thoroughly efficient substitute for her babies.

"Now, what did you do? You turned directly against your destiny, against nature. Because, in the first flush of your love, you wanted to please George at all costs, you deserted your ideal of a home with children and deliberately denied your highest wish. As you say, it distressed you at first, but you made yourself forget it.

"As a matter of fact, did you forget it? You did not. You merely refused to think about it. But that did not help. It was still in your mind, in your subconscious mind. No matter what you did, there it was: your distress because you had no children, and your secret reproach and blaming of your husband for that fact."

"I don't think I ever blamed George," I objected, breathless with wonder at the truth of most of what he was saying.

"Did you blame yourself?"

"No-o," I hesitated. "I think not."

"But the dream," he said, "indicates that you blamed your husband. And dreams never lie. In the dream, he was pursuing the child to destroy it, and not only did you resent that and blame him for it, but you took the hatchet

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and attacked him. The picture of the Indian and the hatchet is but the convenient symbolism by which in your sleep you express that dislike of George which you never allowed yourself consciously to voice during the first three years of your married life. Do you see?"

"Perhaps," I answered, still reluctant.

Then the thought came to me that, during my honeymoon, I had inwardly reproached George. I remembered a night when I had leaned on the sill of my bedroom window, overlooking the sea, and had thought, had even whispered, to myself: "Does he mean this for all the time? Are we never to have any children? Why, George can't be as unnatural as that!"

I caught D R's eye.

"Yes," I told him with childlike candor; "I did reproach him during our honeymoon. I remember that I thought he asked too much."

After that, we talked about the Indian. What did the Indian bring to my mind? It brought many things, most of them childhood things. As a little girl, I had loved the works of Fenimore Cooper and had read all the other books I could find about Indians. And my mother had scolded me for it at first, had pun-

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ished me finally. Girls, she had said, should not become absorbed in blood-and-thunder stories. And all the time the Indian had stood in my mind as the type of one who revenged himself on his enemies, acted swiftly and bravely, fought for his rights.

"You see," said D R, "how natural it was in the dream for you to get help from an Indian in resenting a wrong that had been done you, this injustice of motherhood frustrated.

"Your dream isn't so silly after all, is it? It means simply that, in your sleep, you punished George for having denied you the happiness of having a child. You fulfilled your wish, unconscious or semi-conscious wish, to revenge yourself upon him. If you had fought the matter out with him at the beginning instead of submitting to his preferences against your will, you would, I think, never have been able to have such a dream as this one.

"Our battles all must be fought out sooner or later. If we don't fight them openly and directly, we continue to try to fight them in our dreams, in our daily irritabilities, bursts of rage, discontents—but such substitute battles are never satisfactory. And, finally, we are overwhelmed by our futile struggles. We throw up our hands and surrender. We fight

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no more. When we do that, the world beats us. We are weaklings, unable to go about the business of living properly, unable to achieve happiness."

He sat down opposite me again and looked into the fire.

"But," he went on, "it is not sufficient for you to bring up in your mind the things that hurt you because you looked at them incorrectly and because you responded to them unwisely. It is also necessary that, after you have remembered them, you consider them and see for yourself where and how you acted wrongly.

"For instance, you told me yesterday that you blamed George for all your unhappiness and suffering. Do you blame him for your not having children?"

"Why, certainly," I said at once.

"But is that fair?"

"How do you mean, D R?"

"I mean, can you be sure that you did everything possible to get him to look at the matter from your viewpoint? Did you tell him how miserable the thought of not having children made you? Did you say anything to him to persuade him that children would make both you and him happier in the end?"

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"No. What he said had shocked me too much."

"There! You see? You accepted that blow to your ideals without even a struggle to avoid it. You accepted as final what he said. So! You can't blame him entirely, can you? It was in some degree your fault that things remained as they were, wasn't it?"

"Oh," I said impatiently, "I hate squabbling!"

All the same, he had started me to thinking that George in that one instance might have a case, some sort of defense. But, I reflected, no young girl should be confronted with such a thing by a man six years older than herself. I said as much to D R.

"Oh," he agreed in his gentlest voice, "it was unfortunate, miserably unfortunate; but we must try now to see both sides of the matter, George's as well as yours."

Before he got up to go, he said:

"We must keep on working very hard to remember every one of the ideals which you allowed to be blurred or which other people dimmed and dwarfed for you. If we call them all up and discuss them and see wherein you went wrong, that will cure you of all your nervousness—everything. Ideals, my dear

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child, are the guideposts by which we approach at last to contentment—and to be contented properly is to lead a successful life."

He was about to say goodby when, for no reason at all, I remembered that Marjorie's funeral was to have been this morning. I had not thought about it all day until then. He saw my face change, and asked, "What is it, Ruth?"

"Marjorie's funeral this morning," I answered, a little feverishly. "Did you go?"

"No."

"It seems strange that I didn't."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It just does. We—we knew each other so well."

When he had left, and Miss Keyes came in, I was thinking about Marjorie. Rather, I tried to think about her, but my thoughts were all wandering and confused.

"She's as cold now as she used to look," I would say to myself, and then glance at Miss Keyes and think, "I wonder if *you* are ever troubled—you look so cool and fresh and calm." Then I would have those two thoughts all over again, and over and over. But I simply could not feel overwhelmed with sorrow for Marjorie; I just sat there in front of the

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fire and thought how cold she was, and how fresh and calm Miss Keyes was.

My mind was a whirligig. I could not keep it to the straight line of what I wanted to consider. Again and again, as I tried to make myself realize the tragedy of Marjorie's death, the death of that lovely body with its evil-warm spirit, I found myself wondering in ridiculous vagueness whether Miss Keyes was ever troubled!

The envelope D R had left on the mantel caught my gaze. I took it down and saw that it was addressed to me. On the paper inside were these words:

"This is a typical dream, the kind that has been dreamed by so many women that any psychoanalyst can interpret it at once. It means you secretly dislike your husband because you have no children."

If anybody else had employed such means to convince me of the correctness of his science, I would have considered it theatric, smacking of the charlatan, and like boasting. But D R is not that kind. I realized that he had done it to make me see at the very outset the extreme importance of all my dreams and to increase my faith in the work he was doing with me and for me.

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And the thing astonished me. Even before we had had all our discussion, bringing up painfully the thoughts stirred by the contents of the dream, he had known precisely what I would say, the story that I would narrate! It struck me as marvelous, uncanny.

I crumpled up the note and threw it into the fire. And all at once I was seized by misgivings, doubts. How long would this process have to continue before I could remember what I had seen the night of Marjorie's death? How many tiresome, fruitless days and nights would I have to spend? Why wasn't there some swift, sure way to give me relief? Must I go on indefinitely, racking my brain and battering away my physical strength against the enigma, the double enigma, of my own happiness and Charlie's peril? I could see no hope of timely relief.

Desperation settled upon me. I hurried into the bedroom and studied my face before the mirror, trying to read in my features, not what I wanted to see, but what actually was there. It was the first time I had ever approached a mirror in that state of mind. And I saw that my eyes—eyes which in the old days had had mystic, elusive lights in their black depths, soft lights of high ideals and true

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romance, and quick lights of humor and enjoyment—were characterized now by a sort of steely glitter, very hard and very inexpressive, as if they withdrew my soul from my own inspection. And about my mouth, across the upper lip, plainly evident at the corners, was a new line, a bit coarser than I had ever seen it. The flesh about my eyes was not as firm as I had thought. It seemed to have loosened, ready for the inroads of tiny wrinkles.

It was, I decided, not a happy face. It had that about it which frightened me at first. It was the beginnings of age—age! And I was only twenty-five! D R would have said that it came from the assaults of my hidden thoughts upon my calmness and, therefore, upon my good looks. That infuriated me. People had always called me good looking. I had been good looking. I knew that. Now, the thought of losing my beauty was too much.

In a sudden, all-enveloping, futile burst of rage, I seized a hairbrush and struck the mirror with all my might. It crashed into bits.

When Miss Keyes ran to me, I was outwardly calm, although inside of myself I was seething.

"So awkward!" I said coolly. "I accidentally struck the mirror with a brush."

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CHAPTER XVI

THIS, the fourth day since Marjorie's death, has been productive of so much—and so little! D R was called to Philadelphia for an important consultation, but there were many others who wanted to see me. I suppose they think, as Marjorie has been buried, they are now at liberty to satisfy their curiosity by coming to study me, to form their opinions as to what effect the tragedy has had upon me. Mrs. Mason was the first to leave her card after asking for me insistently. Lots of others, some of them good friends of mine, called also. But I refused to see them. They would have assured me of their sympathy. Sympathy! It is almost always a mockery, a device through which smug people pat themselves on the back and say to themselves, "Thank heaven! nothing like this ever happened to us!" And I simply felt that I could not stand it.

Before luncheon, however, Dick Jerdyce and Tom Fordney came, and I did see them.

They were waiting for me in the small parlor. I found them standing with their backs

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to the open fire. They seemed like strange men, they were so solemn, so subdued of manner. In a way, they awed me. I had never seen them like that before. Always they and Charlie had been, with me, so full of life, so much the impersonation of the delight of living, so unfailingly an incentive to gayety and brightness and high-hearted laughter. They had never seemed to take themselves or life very seriously.

As I entered the room, their greeting was stiff, almost brusque, so determined were they not to let their emotion get the better of them. They appeared desperately afraid of seeming sentimental. I could see how they held themselves in.

"Hello, Ruth," was all Dick Jerdyce said, as he took my hand.

He was striking looking in his captain's uniform. The dignity of it, perhaps, accentuated the gravity in his face.

While he pulled forward a chair for me, Tom Fordney held my hand in a long clasp, and asked affectionately, "How you do?"

Tom sat down opposite me, but Dick stood, leaning his tall figure on one elbow against the mantel. They are altogether different, these two—Dick, with his long, lean face and strong,

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bony jaw, a countenance wonderfully expressive of his keen knowledge of human nature and his quick, rather mordant wit; and Tom, round-faced, chubby, a little florid, one who likes his cocktails and his practical jokes.

"Feeling pretty fit?" Dick looked down at me in real concern.

"Yes," I said, feeling oddly oppressed. "Have you seen Charlie?"

"Just came from there," he answered with his new, clipped way of speaking.

"How is he?"

"Fine."

"In great shape," supplemented Tom.

"But tell me!" I demanded. "Tell me about him. How does he feel? What does he think? What does he say?"

"Got the finest nerve I ever saw," Dick said, turning slightly and leaning with both shoulders against the mantel.

"You'd think he was on a lark instead of in jail, almost," Tom elaborated.

Dick handed me a cigarette and lit one for himself.

After that, he walked to the window and back. Tom sat staring into the fire.

"You see, it's this way," Dick began after he had resumed his place before the fire; "I

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start for New York tomorrow. I sail for France in a short while."

"Of course, of course," I commented, as if he had said he liked the weather.

"And Tom's to get his commission before the week's up."

"Of course," I repeated, and added irrelevantly, "I haven't done any Red Cross work for weeks and weeks."

The war was so far away, and my own suffering was so near! I knew that I should feel interested in the war, but I couldn't. It was, for the time being, something that did not touch me in any manner.

I just sat there, reproaching myself for that feeling in an impersonal, insincere way.

"And," Dick concluded, "we wanted to talk to you about Charlie before we left."

"I think we ought to tell her, though," Tom suggested, "that Charlie told us not to."

"Yes," agreed Dick; "he wouldn't hear of it—told us to let you alone."

There was an awkward pause.

"Tell me everything," I turned to Tom.

"We went down there, to the jail, this morning," he said, fidgeting nervously in his chair. "We saw him with his lawyer, William Rittenhouse—you know, the Rittenhouse of Ritten-

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house, Stabler and West. And Charlie told us about where he was the—that night after she—she died. He said he was so unstrung that he couldn't hang around, and he walked bare-headed through the streets to the club. It never occurred to him that the police would want him that night. He went into one of the card rooms and, mechanically more than any other way, drank a lot of champagne while he sat there trying to figure the thing out.

"He didn't get drunk, he said, but he couldn't think things out clearly. All at once he wanted to get out, to be in the open—you know how he loves motion anyway. And he had a boy telephone for a horse. He was riding about in the country aimlessly from three in the morning until he came back into the city and the policeman saw him. Strangely enough, that was when the champagne affected him. He felt groggy, he said, just as soon as he slipped from the horse."

"What did Mr. Rittenhouse say to that?" I asked.

"Well, he didn't ——" Tom hesitated.

"You might as well know, Ruth," cut in Dick. "We came here to tell you. Rittenhouse said he didn't suppose that story would be hard to substantiate, but he did say he

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couldn't see how the story Palmer heard you tell Charlie was to be combated."

"And Charlie?"

"He said—these were his words: 'I don't know about that. My personal opinion is that Mrs. Marden saw somebody, and, because she thought Miss Nesbit and I had had some differences, leaped to the conclusion in her nervous state that I was the man.'"

"Was that all he said?" I pursued.

I could feel the blood pounding my temples. They were so slow, so timid about their words.

"Oh, he said he was innocent, and he had not the slightest doubt of being vindicated. 'In this age,' he flung at us with his old buoyancy, 'you can't hang a man for nothing.' He was great, Ruth, great."

"Before we left," supplemented Tom, "he took me aside and told me we were not to annoy you in any way. 'I know you fellows will go to see Ruth,' he said. 'That's right. She'll be glad to see you. She'll need a little cheering up, I guess. But there's only one message you're to give her from me. Tell her I'm right as a trivet, and say I sent her word that she's not to concern herself about me for one moment—not for one moment is she to concern herself about me.' When we left him, he was

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standing in the middle of the jail reception room, smiling, his hands in his pockets as he swayed gently to and fro on the balls of his feet—you know, his favorite attitude."

"And Mr. Rittenhouse—the lawyer—what did he tell you boys?"

I had a sickening premonition of what the answer would be.

"Hang it all!" burst forth Dick. "That's what we came to see you about, and we might as well have it over. Rittenhouse said, unless we could overturn your story, which Palmer heard, Charlie didn't have a chance on earth."

The immensity of that took away my power of speech for a moment, and I looked helplessly first at one and then at the other.

"And how," I asked at last, "can my story be overturned?"

"You're the only one who can do it," said Dick, and walked to the window.

"That's it, Ruth," Tom stumbled on. "You must try something besides this aphasia, this not knowing what happened, what you saw."

Immediately I knew what these two thought: that the aphasia was merely a pretence, that I remembered having seen Charlie

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kill Marjorie, and that I, in order to save him after the damage had been done, had put forward the story of not being able to remember what I had seen and said.

From the window Dick flung over his shoulder:

"You've got to remember you didn't see Charlie—and, after that, Palmer's story about what he heard can't stand absolutely unsupported."

"You see?" emphasized Tom.

"You don't believe that happened to me?" I asked in amazement. "You two, who know me so well, don't believe my memory of those things was wiped out, utterly?"

Tom answered me, and his voice shook a little as he spoke.

"Nobody believes it, Ruth. You might as well know. It—it seems too extraordinary. It doesn't seem—possible, don't you know."

"Doctor Doyle says it *is* possible," I offered in explanation. "It has happened to others. There are many precedents. And my memory may be restored. It was destroyed, temporarily, by the emotional strain under which I was laboring. You must—you two *must* believe that, must believe me."

Dick came back from the window.

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"If you say so, we do believe, Ruth," he assured me. "I guess we were mistaken. We thought you had adopted this tack as the best way of saving Charlie. And we wanted to tell you it wouldn't do."

"In some way," explained Tom, "we got the idea that Charlie thought you were merely trying to save him by keeping quiet."

"We thought," said Dick, "that was why he sent you word not to concern yourself about him. He doesn't want you to make any sacrifices for him."

Then I told them how D R had begun to treat me, how I would work, how I *was* working, to regain my recollection of what I had seen, and how favorable the chances were for my success.

"And, when I do that," I said, "I shall tell it all. I shall be glad to tell it, because I am as sure as you are that Charlie didn't do this terrible thing."

I asked them if anybody else was under suspicion.

"Nobody," replied Dick, in quick emphasis. "Nobody. The way things stand now, Charlie is doomed—doomed."

"Such a thing can't happen," I broke forth, moved by the despairing, futile anger I have

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felt so often lately. "It just can't! I shall remember."

"You understand," begged Tom, "why we didn't believe the aphasia story, don't you? We knew you were the real thing, and we thought you'd hit on that as the best way to save him."

"Yes," I said wearily. "I understand."

I understood also that they did not understand about me, that they had not the remotest idea of what I was suffering, that they could not estimate the cost of what I was doing so as to overcome this loss of memory which they had doubted.

In spite of their immobility there before me, I sensed their nervousness. Dick, I knew, was anxious to be off to arrange for his departure to the front. Tom, I felt, was thinking he was due back at his desk in the State Department.

They had gotten through with their mission. They had done all they could for Charlie. They were, perhaps, very, very sorry for me. But this was not a thing that sucked up the essence of their lives and dwarfed all other things into nothingness—not for them. It was I who bore the brunt of it, all the weight of it. Why, they had told me, in so many

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words, that it was I who would free Charlie or send him to destruction! They had given me that to contemplate, and here they were, impatient to go about their other affairs.

And they were good fellows, fine men, my warm friends. Yet, in this sorrow, they were as far from me as perfect strangers might have been. They could not reach me, and I could not reach them. It did not seem fair that I should bear so much, they so little.

"Oh, it is awful, awful!" I said, getting to my feet, my voice tremulous more with anger than with distress. "It is so awful for me. You don't know. You don't know!"

"Yes," said Dick; "it's one of those things one can't grasp in ordinary terms of thought."

"Immeasurable," said Tom, swallowing hard.

"Crucifixion by circumstances. We know," Dick added.

I had a revulsion of feeling.

"Thank you," I said, my voice steady again. "I believe you do."

A little later, I sat before the fire in my writing room and went over what they had said. After all, they had told me nothing that I had not suspected. I had believed all along that the outside world considered the story of

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my loss of memory a lie I had told in the hope of not having to testify against Charlie and of weakening Chief Palmer's story of what I had said that morning to Charlie. They had merely made more clear to me the absolute necessity of my recalling those events.

Their description of Charlie had been fine, his cheerfulness, his confidence, his thoughtfulness in sending me word not to concern myself about him. I could close my eyes and see him, as Tom had sketched him, his hands in his pockets, smiling, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet—the old Charlie, he of the high spirits. And I am not to concern myself! . . .

Miss Keyes brought me an afternoon paper.

This was the first article that caught my eye:

"Somebody other than Charles T. Corcoran, the wealthy clubman, who is now in the District jail as the result of the verdict of a coroner's jury, may have murdered Miss Marjorie Nesbit in the George Marden residence on the night of October 25. That is the problem now confronting Chief of Police Palmer and his subordinates.

"This new element of mystery was injected into the case this morning when Lawrence

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Dolby, an extra waiter employed in the Marden home for serving refreshments at the dance that night, told Detective Springer of having seen a suspicious character in the gardens back of the house at the time the murder was committed.

"According to Dolby, who went to headquarters this morning and volunteered his story, he was standing in the kitchen door a few minutes past midnight when he happened to look up and see a man astride the high brick wall which separates the Marden garden from the alley. The man looked as if he had just climbed the wall from the inside of the yard and was making his escape. He dropped out of sight into the alley while Dolby was looking at him.

"Hardly had the man disappeared when there broke out the confusion in the house as a result of the discovery of the dead woman's body in the conservatory. Strange to say, Dolby, according to his statement, failed to couple the man on the fence with the tragedy until last night when he was thinking over the crime.

"Dolby's description of the intruder is that he was rather small of stature and very thin. Dolby was impressed by the man's gauntness

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because, as he moved his legs in getting off the top of the wall, they got the legs of the loose, baggy trousers he wore into a position which clearly outlined the thinness of his limbs. Dolby could see this from the glare of an arc-light in the alley.

"The tramp, as Dolby calls him, had on his face a black beard of about a week's growth, and his face was pallid. He wore a battered derby hat. Dolby could identify him, he says."

Marjorie's tramp!

The gauntness, the baggy clothing, the black beard, the pallid face, the battered derby hat, all those were the details of the man's appearance which struck me that morning in Marjorie's kitchen. The paper slid from my lap as I sat up straight, trying to think what this meant.

I remembered the assured, possessing light in the tramp's eyes, and the warm, alluring glow of Marjorie's. There came back to me the impression of danger, of sensual wickedness, I had received from witnessing the scene. It had been pregnant with possibilities, so much so that I had felt intuitively that Marjorie needed the protection of her mother.

What had come out of that strange acquaint-

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anceship, that unnatural congeniality between Marjorie and the derelict man? She had seen him again, once that I knew of, perhaps at other times. Had she, in her foolish toying with the man's passion, inflamed him to the point of idiocy? Was it possible that he could have presumed to jealousy? Had her weakness carried her into reckless disregard for everything? Could he have thought himself entitled to dispute possession of her with any one? Was it within the range of human probability that he resented her presence at the dance while he, outlawed by fate and yet her blood-brother by temperament, was consigned to the alley?

Had he killed her because she had amused herself with him as she had done with so many other men, men more restrained than he, men not so elemental, so impatient of law and conventionality, as he?

If that had happened, Charlie would go free.

I picked up the paper again. With the exception of the waiter Dolby's photograph, and the statement that the police had instituted search for the tramp here and in other cities, there was nothing more of interest.

I, then, knew more than the police. I, alone, had the key to the real connection be-

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tween Marjorie Nesbit and the derelict. I was the only one who could show a possible reason why the tramp should have wanted to punish her. I could tell the story of how Marjorie had stooped down from her high position to talk, to play, to engage in the color of sin, with this creature of the gutters.

On a sudden impulse, I rang for Miss Keyes.

"Please call Mr. William Rittenhouse on the telephone," I told her, "Rittenhouse of Rittenhouse, Stabler and West, and say to him that Mrs. George Marden has some important information for him. Ask him to come here today, at once."

Within the hour I was talking to him—a little man with hard, steel-gray eyes and very tight thin lips. He sat in one attitude all the time, made no gestures, betrayed no emotion—just kept still and listened to every word I said and studied me. He impressed me as having great power.

I described to him the scene between Marjorie and the tramp and elaborated my theory that it had led to the murder. I went with great detail into a description of the expressions I had seen on their faces and what I had taken those expressions to mean. I re-

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peated several times my willingness to testify about the whole thing at the trial.

When my story was finished, he was silent for quite a long time, thinking.

"I beg your pardon," he said at last, "but do you know positively that Miss Nesbit ever did anything—er—that is, ever was actually guilty of immorality?"

"No," I replied. "I never heard anything like that about her."

"Or that she was ever dangerously indiscreet?"

I thought of the night she and George had spent together.

"Well, no," I said, a little hesitant.

"That's the difficulty," he observed, after he had looked at me sharply. "No jury would ever accept what you saw in her face as proof against her character, or proof that she had encouraged this tramp as you describe. It's not evidence, really."

"But I thought it might be, since the tramp is now known to have been so near the scene of the murder."

"You see, Mrs. Marden," he explained, "I'm looking at this, not from my viewpoint, but from that of the prosecuting attorney. I know him, very keen fellow, unusually able.

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Harrow won't be bothered by the waiter Dolby's story unless it is corroborated in some way."

"You mean it won't help Char—Mr. Corcoran?"

"Not without corroboration. Harrow will put Dolby through a cross-examination that will make him admit, in the end, that what he saw on the fence was nothing but a shadow. No; the Dolby story, unsubstantiated, won't help—won't help at all. The only hope is to find the tramp."

"And yet," I objected bitterly, "I know, know as well as I know my name, Miss Nesbit was bad."

"Quite so," he agreed, coolly analytical. "The world is rather densely populated with people who, without ever breaking a single law, are thoroughly evil. But justice, as it is administered, never touches them."

"But," I persisted, "the paper says the police are looking for the tramp."

"Oh, yes. They want him. To produce him and prove that he saw Corcoran go back into the conservatory from the veranda, or to have him say he saw nothing connected with the crime, will merely strengthen their case against the accused."

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"Nevertheless," I clung to my point, "I'm sure Mr. Corcoran's friends would like to see this tramp produced. Mr. Corcoran himself would pay a handsome reward for his discovery."

On that, he reflected.

"That's not a bad idea, Mrs. Marden," he conceded. "I'll suggest it to Mr. Corcoran: that he offer a reward for the apprehension of the tramp. It will have a good effect on public opinion, his eagerness to dig up anybody who can tell anything about the events of that night."

"I would be so glad if you would," I thanked him.

"Of course," he said, rising, "you are the most important witness."

"Oh, Mr. Rittenhouse," I exclaimed, "if I only could! If I only could remember!"

"You may," he answered, his manner softening. "Aphasia is a queer business. This is not the first time I've encountered it."

But he left with me, as Dick Jerdyce and Tom Fordney had done, the conviction that I, and I alone, could save Charlie from the mass of circumstantial evidence against him.

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CHAPTER XVII

THIS is the first time in more than two weeks that I have written in this diary. Today is the fifteenth of November, and altogether I have had seventeen talks, or "sessions," with D R in the long, grinding struggle "to find my own soul" and to regain my memory. It has been cruelly hard, a little encouragement followed by great discouragement, an imaginary ray of light succeeded by darkness and despair. The "association of ideas" has seemed to lead everywhere except to the point I desire.

I know I should not complain. Everything is done for my comfort and pleasure. D R's patience is indescribable, his persistence giant-like, his confidence in the ultimate result unshakable. I never see George. He has dropped out of my life, as I wished.

I continue to have my meals up here in my writing room with Miss Keyes, whom I have retained as a companion rather than as a nurse. She bears wonderfully with my petulance and

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unreasoning bursts of anger. If she does not understand me, she is at least completely tolerant, and always kind.

The grand jury has brought in the indictment for murder against Charlie. The police have unearthed no sign of the tramp. Even Charlie's offered reward of a thousand dollars for information looking to his apprehension has produced no results.

More and more it becomes plain that the life of Charlie Corcoran, the life of my friend, my "playfellow," depends utterly on me. The enormity of that responsibility rests upon me continuously. I can not escape the thought of it. If I do not *remember,* he will be convicted. Everybody says so. I know it is true. And still that terrible night is something hidden from me as completely as if it had never been. I can not lift up even a little corner of the curtain that conceals it. My desire to do so and my inability grind me between them.

This analysis is so slow, some of it so apparently without reason! It seems to me that D R and I have gone down into the depths of my subconsciousness and dragged up to the light of day a million experiences and impressions of my past. But, so far, that night,

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which contained the most important few hours of all my life, recedes always from me.

The idea of suicide still haunts me. There are times when I feel that I must leave this house and everybody I know. Often in the daytime I am compelled to go into my bedroom where I may be alone and clench my hands and gnash my teeth to prevent my shouting aloud ugly things, even disgusting and profane expressions, words I did not even know I had ever heard. And again, I burn with shame at the thought that I, even in my unconscious condition, thanked Charlie for the murder. Such ideas and shames and regrets pursue me with vivid relentlessness.

And yet, I realize that D R is working steadily, however slowly, toward some goal. My only fear is that we shall never reach the necessary goal, my complete happiness, and the revivification of my memory. In the seventeen hours he has worked over me, he has led me into the real fairyland of dreams.

I know I have learned fascinating things about the symbolisms in all dreams, how they take ordinary things and facts and make them stand for the most beautiful and intimate things in life. I appreciate now the real meaning of thick and verdant underbrush in

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a dream, the invariable significance of a mountain, the meaning of a lane or a long, narrow road, or of a book. I can tell with exactness that thing for which any long, slender instrument stands, and the true significance of a sudden fall. The appearance of water, one of the loveliest symbolisms, is thoroughly familiar to me. In other words, I have come to the place where I can help D R in analyzing the more obvious parts of my dreams.

They recall, with unmistakable emphasis, those incidents that hurt me worst in the sackcloth-and-ashes childhood to which my strict and irritable mother confined me, those events which brought me face to face with things I could not reason out to my satisfaction and had to accept as needlessly painful or inexcusably harsh and wrong in the general scheme of things.

For instance, today one of my dreams reminded me of fairy stories, and that brought into my recollection, as I talked to D R, how rudely and completely my mother shattered my childish belief in fairies when I was ten years old, shortly after my father died. It was one of the biggest tragedies of all my life. It was particularly so because she gave me no explanation, offered me nothing in place of

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the beautiful things I had believed. It caused me only intense suffering and a startled, hot resentment that people should have lied to me so in letting me believe in fairyland.

For I did believe in it, thoroughly and without question of any kind. I was not surprised when my father told me that lovely nymphs lived in the cool, green places under deep waters, and dryads, with hair like gold, danced in the depths of the forest.

Nor did it seem impossible to me that "there was once a king's daughter so beautiful that they called her the Fair One with Golden Locks," and that Avenant, daring all things, finally won her love through the aid of lesser creatures he had befriended.

I was persuaded that the path of braided silver leading across the waters to the moon was made by fairy footsteps. And it was true that the exquisite markings of a flower flung to the world every summer the story of a lover's lovely death. If it was not true, how had the markings been made?

I loved the story that long ago a great ruler believed a beautiful girl could spin straw into gold, and that, when she failed, a man with wonderful power volunteered to accomplish for her the miraculous task to which she had

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been assigned. I believed men spun straw into gold for women always, and always would.

Even the philosophy of fairy stories was, to my childish mind, a true picture of how things were done in the big, outside world. In them, wickedness finally was punished, and the good and deserving received their reward. Those who longed for beautiful things found rest at last in palaces that were beautiful.

The little girl, poisoned by the wicked stepmother, was befriended by seven little men who carried her across the mountains in a casket made all of glass and gold as if it had been the resting place of a king's daughter—and at last she became the daughter of a king.

The child who was starving in the field was fed from a magic table—and the boy who went up to kill the terrible giant succeeded. The girl whose loveliness was radiant even in the smudge of the kitchen escaped her tormentresses and became the bride of a prince.

All of that was exactly as it should have been. I believed it had been so. I believed it always would be so. And suddenly the whole beautiful fabric of that belief was shattered because my mother happened to be in a tantrum and lost her patience when I

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asked her to give me a new book about fairies. That, I say, was one of my great tragedies. It is, I dare say, a great tragedy in most children's lives, a tragedy that never can be undone when once it has been committed.

If I had been told that the fairies lived in our souls and were the embodiments of our strivings for the good and beautiful, that would have saved to me the comfort I had had from the fairies. More than that, it would have helped me in the future battle with life. That is very evident, I think. No childhood should be deprived of Fancy and Romance.

If I have Fancy when I am a child, none of the fogs of life can ever make the world entirely hideous in my eyes. By the same token, if I have in my childhood no Romance, I shall grow up to believe that all women are false and all men liars, because I shall see many false women and shall meet many men who lie and shall have no shield to hide them from me. But, if I have been taught Romance, I shall know throughout my days that the good, the noble, and the sweet are the real predominating elements of life.

We should know more of the grace of Ariel. Caliban always waits round the corner to drag us down.

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But all this is merely an illustration of how my dreams, properly interpreted, parade before my mind the wounds and defeats to which I have been subjected throughout my life. They are legion. Because of my mother's temperament, I was made into a timid child, one who responded with hilarity to advances from anybody but retreated in alarm when no one showed me kindness. I was destined to a life of feeling uncertain of myself, of withdrawing into myself, of being at the same time too much moved by pride and too much cast down by fancied slights.

One by one, these experiences come up. When will the great one appear from that wide territory of the things I thought I had forgotten? When will D R be able to say, "Ah, that is the one; that is the very scene which made you a neurotic child and finally caused you to forget what you saw in the conservatory"?

"Every adult tragedy," he tells me, "is the reflection of a childhood tragedy in some way or another."

When are we to bring up from the depths of my mind that old, old childhood scene which made me forget? Shall we ever be able to bring it up? To answer that, is to answer the

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other question which allows me no peace: Is Charlie to be acquitted?

No wonder that I want to escape from everything, that I long to die!

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CHAPTER XVIII

YESTERDAY my memories were all of my childhood and my mother. Today they were centered on George; and D R and I talked about love. How marvelously this wise, patient man enables me to see that I have regarded the affairs of life either mistakenly or insufficiently! There is about him none of the manner of a preacher, no platitudes, no empty copy-book texts, no maudlin sympathy, no outbursts of blame or censure—merely a friendly, discriminating, and yet so convincing, way of discussing things with unerring accuracy and unqualified frankness.

None but the most moral man should ever attempt psychoanalysis, because the analyst is obliged to take up with his patients, men and women, many things of a nature so delicate that they have never allowed themselves even to dwell upon them in frank consideration. For instance, a week ago we spent half an hour trying to determine exactly why I like the peculiarly embroidered lingerie which I affect!

Today it was about George and my feeling

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toward him, not only the feeling of dislike I have for him now, but particularly the ideals I had about love when I married him, and later. So devious is the path leading back to my remembering what occurred the night of the murder!

"We must remember," D R said, "that not everybody realizes what love is. So many think the mere acceptance of love from another in a happy frame of mind is everything. That, of course, is a dreadful mistake. To be loved is a blessing that comes to us without any special exertion on our part. We deserve no credit for it. It is something given to us, like the sunshine, or the moonlight, or the keen, fresh air of an autumn morning.

"But to love, that is the supreme test of our fitness in life. Then it is that we give something, create an emotion in ourselves that is of the very highest. We become constructive.

"Every girl who marries knows, if she goes downtown and buys a potted plant and puts it in her bedroom window, she must give it care, see that it has plenty of water and sunlight, if it is to be kept alive and made to bloom. But toward love, she has in the great majority of cases a different attitude. 'He loves me,' she says, 'and that's all that is necessary.'

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"She does not understand that love must be nourished with infinite pains, that it is a flower which, if neglected, will wither or die in any human breast. She fails to realize that the vital thing for her is to preserve this precious gift that has been laid at her feet. She is too often possessed by the idea that it will take care of itself, that it is something only for her benefit and pleasure, and that neglect can not kill it.

"Whereas, in fact, it is only by unselfishness and daily care on the part of both man and woman that a beautiful love may be maintained between them. Work, work of the spirit and the heart, is the rare coin with which happy love must be bought."

"I think I loved George that way," I said. "I was always wanting him to be with me, to understand me; and I wanted to be with him and understand him."

"But did you, in fact?" he asked quickly. "Let us see. You have told me how you were always rushing toward him, as you expressed it, always trying to translate yourself to him, show him your needs, and so forth. That was all very well as far as it went. But it was the smaller part of love.

"Did you carry out the greater part? Did

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you study his wants and desires? Did you long, did you agonize, to know him thoroughly? Did you try to interest yourself really and truly in his amusements, his tastes? Was your rushing toward him a thing emphatic enough to carry you over into the domain of his way of looking at things and enjoying life?

"No two people can simply *happen* to be thoroughly congenial and contented together. When they go into marriage, they must agree to *make* themselves, each somewhat in the image of the other, and they must do it in the spirit of love, with great pains, so that their ideals are not lost sight of, so that neither is induced to espouse false values.

"We all know that success in business, in sport, in achieving a reputation, in accumulating money, is won only by the greatest effort and the most painstaking exertion. But success in love, we say, will come of itself, just so, unworked for, without pain and care. Foolish people! The average married couple's life is a sad commentary on what the result of such a view must be."

His words shook me to my depths.

"You are right, D R—perhaps. I believe I was like most girls. I know I expected George's love to last forever. I was not im-

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pressed with the necessity of so much work on my part."

"Of course," he took care to explain, "it must be happy work, cheerful, a thing of gifts and flowers and smiles—whole-hearted, unreserved, with generosity unbounded."

"You think I demanded too much—and gave too little?"

"I want you to think," he left the decision to me. "Surely, in your own heart, now that you have looked at the facts, you know the truth."

I did think for a long while. More than ever, I had the feeling that his knowledge gradually rechiseled me into the semblance of something finer, that his wisdom was like a magic blade, stripping from me a noisome covering of inadequate opinions, distorted ideals, and erring judgments. I felt vaguely troubled.

"Love, you know," he added gently, "is an altar before which the incense of selfless devotion must be kept always burning. It is the great sanctuary for the human heart, but it is a sanctuary intended only for the holy steps of two."

Again I was silent, wondering whether to speak.

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"Tell me," I burst forth at last, "why I was always so delighted with the companionship of Charlie Corcoran, Dick Jerdyce and Tom Fordney. I must know."

"Corcoran," he answered immediately, "was close to the truth the day he said he thought you liked him and the other two because there was some misunderstanding between you and your husband. You were hunting false values. You were taking from them the admiration, the congeniality, and the close fellowship you were not getting from George Marden. You were substituting something outside your home for what you should have had only in your home.

"That, I think, is back of all the friendships you see between married women and outside men. And every husband, consciously or unconsciously, resents it."

"Why?" I demanded.

I was remembering that George, although he never voiced it, had made me realize his resentment in this respect.

"Because he knows there is some sort of sex motive back of any man's marked attention to any woman."

"Oh, D R!"

"I do not mean necessarily grossly sexual,

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in the ordinary acceptance of the word. I mean that the man may see in the woman merely his ideal of what his own wife should be, or his ideal of what every charming woman should be. But, notwithstanding, the sex motive is there."

"I can not believe it," I said indignantly. "I refuse to believe it."

"How many of these friendships between men and women," he asked quietly, "are lasting? And how many of them finally result either in a disagreeable termination or downright scandal?"

To that I had no answer.

"When a woman, a wife," he concluded, "turns to other men to satisfy her craving for entertainment or excitement and to satiate her longing for admiration, she brushes the bloom from the flower of her love for her husband. She is seceding, county by county, from the state of matrimony.—Do you see?"

"You mean she robs her husband?"

"Yes—and fosters rebellion within herself."

Then, impulsively and without consideration, I told him about Mrs. Tarone.

"I tell you," I said indignantly, "I saw him kiss her."

"Where?"

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"It was when we were up on the North Shore—Massachusetts, you know. We were down on the beach, the private beach that belonged to the house we had rented for the summer. They were in a little cove hidden from the rest of us, and I came upon them unexpectedly."

"And that made you feel rebellious?"

"Angry, of course."

"But you said nothing to him—gave him no opportunity to explain?"

"What explanation could there have been?" I demanded.

"Perhaps, he has one," he said with conviction.

I made no comment.

"Now," he elaborated, "your bringing up this Tarone affair on top of our talk about friendship for these three men is very interesting, isn't it? Isn't it suggestive of the fact that you believed, so long as there were Mrs. Tarones in George's life, there could be nothing wrong in your having the Corcorans and Jerdyces in yours?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied, feeling miserable and terribly depressed. "I don't know. Dick made love to me once, before I was married."

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"But it never amounted to anything—with you?"

"Oh, no."

"The principal thing is that you resented Mrs. Tarone, felt rebellious. I am inclined to think the thing at the bottom of all your unhappiness, your neurotic temperament, is your tendency to rebel, to retaliate, to punish instead of ever conciliating and compromising. One can't succeed in life if one always fights back, particularly if one does it without telling why.

"Some day, I think, we shall find out what gave you that temperamental slant, dig up the very incident in your childhood that convinced you it was always right to punish and to fight mercilessly the loved one who hurt you. Yes; I believe we shall come upon that—and learn how wrong the tendency is, wrong because it was implanted in you by an ugly and unwarrantable scene."

Ever since this conversation, I have alternated between cool self-contempt and fierce self-assertiveness. Can it be possible that I undermined my own happiness because I did not understand the real business of loving and living? Was I as much at fault as George? I refuse to believe it. I see that there were

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some things I might have done differently—but the others!

And, if George failed me, was I to mope alone and not try to find pleasure and companionship elsewhere? Why didn't I have the right to rebel, as D R says, against the injustice of Mrs. Tarone and Marjorie—and others? Why was I to beg for explanations?

As I write this, there recurs in my mind the question: Why shouldn't I send for George now and see what he has to say? But no sooner does the question come than I recoil from the suggestion. He has not suffered as I have, has not felt so deeply. He would never understand, never! He is not one to talk things over. I could never get close to him, never know what he really thinks.

It is all as hopeless as ever. Is my happiness to be regained in this way? Does D R think it can be won back this way? I can see he thinks George and I will be reconciled. But how? What is to tear down the wall between us? How can we ever be truly man and wife again?

When I ask that and realize how desperate my plight is, I am still more horrified, because D R has told me that my happiness will come to me at the same time that I remember,

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remember about Marjorie's death. And there settles upon me the weight of this double burden, my lost peace of mind and my responsibility for the imprisonment and indictment of Charlie—Charlie, the man who saw in me the ideal of what his own wife should be!

Can it be that, deep down in my subconscious mind, I don't *want* to remember, that I am in reality glad Charlie killed her and I want to protect him?

"There is," D R told me several days ago, "a compelling, logical reason for everything. If I like curiously carved lamps on long, slender stems, or if I admire tall, graceful women under Gainsborough hats, the reason for it exists and is inextricably bound up in my whole personality. If you like to see, as I know you do, the slanting flight of doves in summer, or fountains hanging like ropes of silver in the light of the moon, the reason for it is due to what the years have taught you of beauty."

If that is true, there is also a compelling reason why I have loved wrongly, lived wrongly. And in that, my comfort must be. D R will find out why my soul was wounded, crippled—and he will make me whole again. I believe that. I must believe it and leave all

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these questions to be answered by him. I must let him lead me like a little child into the light of reason, into the calm sweetness of strength and self-reliance.

For my own comfort—just to reassure myself—I write down here the theory of all that he is doing for me. It is this:

He educates me as to how to control and marshal my thoughts, how to think properly, and how to remember. When that education is complete, when I no longer am terrified by any of the aspects of life, I shall have the mastery of my mental processes. I shall remember everything, and I shall fear nothing. Therefore, when I regain my own happiness, I shall possess also the ability to tell the truth about Charlie and to free him from the accusation now made against him.

That is clear enough to me when I set it down in black and white. But I can not keep it always before me. The old fears still overwhelm me. I am not yet able " to walk alone." I know that, if, for any reason, D R deserted me now, I should be miserable for the rest of my days.

It is not strange, then, that I love him, that I turn to him for advice on everything, and that, for the time being, he is to me a father

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and a protector. And, deep down in my heart, I know I believe he will eventually do for me all that he promises. The only trouble is that this belief is so often obscured and without the power to comfort me.

Hurry, D R! Hurry! I have suffered so long—and Charlie!

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CHAPTER XIX

TODAY I approached a feeling of exultation. It is the eighteenth of November, and Charlie's trial is set for the third of December. With that ordeal only sixteen days off, he sent me this characteristic note:

"*Somewhere In Jail.*

"DEAR RUTH: Don't bother yourself about me. Worry is the enemy of the leisure classes. Don't surrender to it. Rittenhouse has told me of your sending for him. It was the sort of thing you would do. Pretty soon I'll thank you in person.

"Of course, they have no case against me. True, the whole affair is a mystery, but no twelve men will punish me because the police have been unable to solve the problem. I am as gay as a lark. Once more: don't worry.

"Yours,

"CHARLIE."

But that was not the only thing to cheer me up. In the morning paper was a long, detailed statement of the fact that the police and the prosecuting attorney, Mr. Harrow, feared

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the collapse of their case against Charlie, owing to the fact that they had nothing against him but circumstantial evidence. In view of this, they have redoubled their efforts to find the tramp seen by the man Dolby the night of the murder. Descriptions of him have been sent again to all cities and towns in the country as far west as St. Paul, and wide publicity has been given to the reward offered by Charlie for his apprehension.

Corcoran's anxiety to find the tramp, the paper pointed out, was another thing that disquieted the authorities, since it evidenced his confidence in his ability to withstand anything the missing man might say. It is claimed that some of the police believe the tramp is more probably the murderer than Charlie. Their only difficulty is that they can discover no possible motive for his having committed the crime. He may have been actuated by the desire to rob the dead woman of her jewelry. That he did not rob her, weakens their suspicions, although it may be that he was frightened off before he had time to carry out any such intention.

At any rate, it is feared that no conviction can be had against the man now in jail. "The police ambition," said the article in the paper,

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" is to secure a conviction. Therefore, the prosecution of Corcoran will not waver. On the contrary, it will be carried through with every resource at the department's and the prosecuting attorney's command. However, everybody realizes that the case would be strengthened—or a new accused be secured—if the mysterious tramp could be located.

" Chief Palmer still maintains his confident belief that Mrs. George Marden will be a witness, a valuable witness, at the trial. Although it is generally understood now that the prominent society woman suffered a curious stroke of aphasia which still prevents her remembering the events of the night in question, the chief, without giving his reasons for his opinion, declares that she will appear with the whole story. It is upon this that he bases his prediction of a conviction of Corcoran, although some of his subordinates do not share his optimism.

" If he has a card up his sleeve, he is determined not to let the public see it at this time."

The references to myself in the article did not cause me any uneasiness. I think that is because, in spite of my wavering and uncertainty, I have reached the point where I believe

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implicitly in the power of D R to restore me to a normal condition and to give me back my power of memory unimpaired. And, added to that, is my trust in Charlie's innocence.

The tramp is the murderer. Not only am I convinced of it, but I have an abiding faith in the future, that the tramp will be found and brought to justice. I know, *know,* in advance, that, when I do recall what I saw that night, I shall remember having seen him.

All this made me ask D R today if I might go to see Charlie at the jail. He said he saw no objection. After we had talked it over, we decided that it could have no other result than to benefit Charlie. It would show my sincerity in my statement that I had not seen him commit the murder and would emphasize my belief in his innocence.

I wonder now that I had not thought of it long before. When I mentioned this to D R, he said:

"Heretofore, you've been thinking of yourself so entirely that you haven't had time to think about anybody else—don't you think so?"

"Yes," I answered. "And does this mean that I'm better—better because I am not so wrapped up in my own affairs all the time?"

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"Of course. It is an old but an always timely truth that we get out of the world exactly what we give to the world. We help ourselves only when we help others."

Miss Keyes and I went to the jail in my car. It was the first time I had been out of the house. We had sent no word of our coming, but the jailer was very kind and showed us into the bare reception room, which was furnished with a plain deal table and plain straight-backed chairs. There was one window, iron-barred, looking out on the desolate ground toward the river. The cold, rough outlines of the room gave me my first real impression of the surroundings to which Charlie had had to submit during all his confinement.

A warden ushered him into the room and retired. He came toward me, a little look of concern on his face in spite of his smile. So far as I could see, he had not changed at all. He had all the spring and snap of former times in his manner.

"My!" he said gaily, taking my hand. "I'm glad to see you."

"I wish I had come long ago," I said, and introduced him to Miss Keyes.

The three of us sat down. Charlie was the

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only one who seemed natural, free from constraint.

"Now," he sighed, as if in delighted expectancy, "tell me all the news, all the gossip."

"I came to beg your forgiveness," I refused to let him be light-hearted. "I don't know how you can ever forgive my folly in ——"

"Don't think of it, Ruth," he interrupted me. "Forgive what, pray? There's nothing to forgive. Besides, don't pretend I'm threatened with anything serious. You might remind me of tiresome people, a thing you never did in your life. I've been visited by a representative of the Prisoners' Aid Society, and by so many people who believe I've committed a crime. They all say, 'How sad! How sad!' or they exclaim, 'How careless he is!' They've made me laugh when they haven't reduced me to tears of boredom. But you—why, we can't waste our time with that sort of talk. Neither you nor I ever got very close to mock heroics, did we?"

He clapped both his hands lightly, palms down, on the deal table, thrust his head forward in the attitude I knew so well, and laughed.

"The ruling passion strong in jail!" he exclaimed, the old gayety in his voice. "Haven't you a cigarette, a good cigarette, in

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that bewildering mesh of gold you call a bag?"

I handed him the bag, and he burrowed in it like a child looking for candy.

"But you must let me tell you," I said desperately, "that I am doing all I can, Doctor Doyle is doing all he can, to bring back my memory of that night."

He looked up from the bag.

"Is that true?" he asked, as if amazed. "Rittenhouse told me something of it, but I didn't believe it."

"Why, Charlie?"

He lit the cigarette he had found, and handed the bag to Miss Keyes.

"Oh," he said, "I thought you, of all people, would realize the absurdity of this charge against me and not bother yourself about it. Don't waste any more time on it, Ruth. Please, don't."

He inhaled the smoke deeply.

"Ah," he breathed in frank enjoyment, "this is good."

He was all animation and keen interest again.

"Some news, some news, my kingdom for some news! I do nothing down here but talk to Rittenhouse who has a blanket indictment

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of humanity stuffed into the place where his heart ought to be. I see him, and I've seen a few men. But men know nothing about telling you news. They talk only of cards, horses, and the war. Women are the only people who have the gift of talking about people, human affairs. Tell me! What's happening in the world of chiffon and champagne? What skeletons rattle against the saucers as the spoons clink against the teacups in the afternoons? What scandals sweep their sombre robes across the ballroom floors? What domestic tragedies furnish the succulent fare for the discriminating palate at state dinners? What beauty's lustre is dimmed? What reputation is being damned?"

"Oh, Charlie," I finally cried out, "I haven't been anywhere. I haven't seen anybody. I haven't done anything but worry about you."

His manner changed at once to the gravest concern. The gayety slipped from him as if by magic.

"Forgive me, Ruth," he said, like one who is penitent. "Forgive me. Of course, I should have remembered."

That showed me how hard he had been acting with his assumption of merriment.

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I reached across the table and took his hand for a moment.

"Charlie," I said, my voice gone all to pieces, "we believe in you. We all do."

He looked at me very seriously.

"Of course, *you* do," he answered me a little huskily.

"And, whatever happens," I told him, speaking with greater firmness, "remember: I shall get back my recollection of what I saw that night. I shall go on the stand and tell it all. I know I shall remember everything, everything, by the third of December."

He half started to his feet, with, "Oh, don't, Ruth! Leave it alone!"

Then, seeing my surprise, he slid back into his chair.

"What's the use of your torturing yourself this way? It's all going to come out right. I'm not one bit afraid. Really, I'm not. I wish you wouldn't bother."

He turned to Miss Keyes.

"Exert your authority," he said in his old light manner. "Make her take care of herself. Women, you know, have such a weakness for letting these neurologists annoy them to death."

After that, in spite of me, he steered the con-

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versation into easier channels, gossiping about the people we knew, the men who had gone to the war, the women who were doing great things in war relief. As I rose to leave, he said:

"I'm going to the front as soon as this is over. The aviation business intrigues me immensely. I like speed."

His last words to me were, "Don't bother another moment, Ruth. Things are perfectly fine, just as they are."

And he spoke with the air of supreme confidence.

On the way home, I asked Miss Keyes—I call her Mildred now:

"What did you think of him?"

"He's innocent," she said with quiet conviction. "Anybody can see that."

"I know he's innocent," I declared, "and I know I shall be able to prove it. I know."

My visit to him, I see now, did not mean to him anything near what I had intended it to mean. He had so dominated the situation, had so taken control of the talk, that he had made of it merely a "conventional call" which he appreciated more than he could say. And I had meant to prostrate myself before him, to beg for his forgiveness, to assure him that he

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had nothing to fear because D R would give me command of my memory, and I would clear him through my evidence. Yet, I had succeeded in doing none of that. I had been inadequate when confronted by my opportunity.

I had even forgotten to congratulate him on the pessimism of the police and on their anxiety to find the tramp. In fact, I had not carried him the comfort and cheer I had hoped to do.

Nevertheless, he had given me immeasurable hope. His bearing, his voice, his courage, had reconvinced me—if that had been necessary—of his innocence and of the impossibility of his being punished for a crime of which he was innocent. He had given me far more than I had taken to him.

Charlie Corcoran is, I believe, the bravest man I ever knew.

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CHAPTER XX

I HAVE seen Marjorie's tramp! And I would give everything I possess if I had never seen him, if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. Yesterday I felt that I could put out my hands and gather hope in their eager grasp. Tonight I am wretched, miserable. I am too much like that, at one time walking on false heights, at another in depths that are real. The hours take hold of me and throw me hither and thither without mercy, without cessation.

Early this morning, quite soon after breakfast, Miss Keyes came to me with the information that there was a tramp downstairs insisting that he be allowed to see me. She had tried to get rid of him, she said, but he had refused dismissal.

"There's something about him, Mrs. Marden," said Mildred; "I don't know what it is, but he affected me so strangely, so strongly. I believe he wants to tell you something important."

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"What does he say?" I asked, and, as I put the question, I thought of Marjorie's derelict.

"He keeps repeating that you will not be sorry if you see him. But it isn't so much what he says. It's the way he says it. He's compelling, for all his rags."

"That's enough to arouse my curiosity," I said. "I'll go down and see him."

I had Jeffries show him into the small parlor.

He came in and stood, a short distance from the door, marvelously at ease in spite of his grotesque appearance. There could have been no possibility of my failing to recognize him. He was the man who had held with his ardent gaze the warm, inviting eyes of Marjorie that morning in her mother's kitchen. The unnatural pallor of his face, the flaming eyes, the finely chiseled nostrils, the worn clothes bagging over his gauntness, even the beard of four or five days' growth—all the details of his appearance were as they had been when I had seen him before.

He held the battered derby hat with easy grace in his right hand.

I was seated near the fire opposite him. The strong light from the wine-like autumn sunshine fell full on his face. As I looked at him and saw the expression in his eyes, I

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remembered, with odd distinctness, what he had said to Marjorie about the eyes of the bird whose nest he had robbed when he was a boy.

"You wanted to see me?" I asked, in a neutral tone.

He came one step nearer to me.

"I've made so bold as to insist upon it," he replied, his resonant voice so much that of a cultured man of the world that now, as on the other occasion of my hearing it, I was really startled. It was so unsuited to his appearance, to his shabbiness. "They told you?" he continued. "They seemed to think you would not see me."

He paused, waiting my permission to say more.

"What is it you want?" I asked, giving no intimation that I remembered him.

"It is a favor, a promise," he said, with a smile that was half pathos, half irony.

Apparently, he realized with painful thoroughness his presumption in asking anything of anybody.

Somehow, I knew it had to do with Marjorie. Stranger than that was the fact that I had no conscious thought about his having killed Marjorie. As I look back upon it now, I am sure I did not consider that phase of the

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matter at all. I was not even thinking, at the moment, about what bearing this man's reappearance would have on Charlie's fortunes. His eyes commanded my attention to him so forcefully that I was taken up with wondering what he had to say. It was strange, unnatural.

There I was, a few moments before convinced that he had committed the murder and obsessed with the wish that he might be found by the police for Charlie's sake. But, as I looked at him, or, rather, as his fiery glance held mine, I felt neither interest in Charlie nor loathing for the tramp because I was sure he was the murderer. To all intent, there was for the time being nobody in the world but him and me. And I, *I*, had condemned Marjorie so fiercely because she had been interested in him.

"How can *I* do anything for *you?*" I asked, avoiding any display of interest.

He was now standing quite close to me, that out-of-place grace of attitude characterizing his gaunt frame.

"You saw her—Miss Nesbit—with me that morning—in her house," he stated, positive in tone, although hesitant in phrase.

I looked at him closely, as if I sought to remember.

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He put out his left hand with a deprecatory, pleading gesture which effectively did away with any pretence on my part.

"Of course, you remember, Mrs. Marden."

"Yes," I said. "I do remember."

"Then I may speak?"

"If there is anything I can really do for you," I answered, with more kindness in my tone than I had intended.

Mechanically, I noticed that his hands were well kept—and I thought it queer.

"I am," he began, "as you see, nothing but a tramp, a derelict. I ——"

Quite unexpectedly to myself, without any conscious volition, I interrupted him to ask him to sit down.

He took the chair at the opposite end of the hearth.

"You will forgive my explaining," he began again with his slow, pathetic smile, his eyes reminding me all the time of the eyes of a bird. "I have gone down and under—hopelessly. There are people who do that—lose their courage, give up their pride, and drift. Some do it at forty, some at fifty. I went under at thirty. There is, I believe, I know, no good thing in me. Aspiration, ambition"—he smiled horribly at that—"manliness, are

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dead in me, totally destroyed. It is arrogance for me to take up your time."

I made a move of my head in negation. He bent forward in his chair and spoke with feverish swiftness.

"You know nothing of that. It is something nobody cares to know. But I am of the tribe of Ishmaelite—continually unhappy, ground down forever. It was so before—let us say, before my fall. I always reached out for greater happiness than I had, than I could get. Nothing satisfied me. I belonged to the army of those who know no peace, to the caravansarai of discontent. Some human beings are born like that. They can not struggle and win. They are doomed, predestined to ruin.

"So you know me, Mrs. Marden, an outcast, one who is now blind to beauty. Music has no charms for me any more—I who loved music. Beautiful sunsets are to me nothing but the coming of night. So far as loveliness and good and nobility are concerned, I am atrophied, dead, all of me. I am an ugly thing leading an ugly life in ugly ways. I who was once a man am become the sport of men. I who was once a character am now moral dust."

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He paused a moment and stroked slowly the battered, discolored crown of the derby that rested on his knee.

"I am anxious for you to recognize me as I am," he resumed, "so that you may not be too greatly shocked when I tell you—what I have to tell you. One who has been high, who has seen the stars, always falls lowest. Let me repeat: I am moral dust. For ten years I've been that, nothing more."

He rose to his feet, as if the strength of his feeling lifted him, as if he felt the need of more space, more movement, in his attempt to describe what had happened to him. I was utterly oblivious of his dress, of his grotesqueness. The battered hat, for all I saw of it, might have been a scepter. He fascinated me by his very intensity.

"Then I saw her—Miss Nesbit," his voice thrilled delicately. "It was not merely what my physical eyes saw—the pomegranate mouth, the brilliant, audacious hair, her eyes that were not only eyes but fires of affliction. It was that immediately I knew her soul, as she knew mine. Do you see? You who had known her all her life—she was to you a stranger. And of necessity. There are no emigrants from the realms of lasting discontent

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to the crowded level of ordinary emotions. We who battle with the current of life, heading always for the harbors that gleam in the distance and finding them, upon arrival, gloomy holes whose shadows were but mirages of light from afar—you others never know us.

"And that is the curse of both of us. It is the explanation of all the woe, all the tears, all the hardness of heart in all the world. Nobody ever knows another—nobody ever, save those who have in their eyes those fires, fires of affliction. We were like that, she and I. We had known the baptism of incommunicable yearning, irredeemable discontent. I wonder if you understand—what it means, always to be out of the reach of happiness and satisfied desires."

He was silent a moment, his glance cast downward, as if he despaired of making me understand.

"At any rate," he rushed out the words, "I knew her for what she was—and she knew me! I—think of it!—I, the nondescript, the ruined creature, could walk a while with her in perfect communion, in unspeakable understanding! I, the tramp, the despised, took her in my arms, kissed her on her mouth, felt all her loveliness pulsate with a pleasure that had in it too much

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of pain—she who was destined for tragedy, who was born never to be thoroughly happy, she in whom the fires of longing and discontent smouldered hotly. And I who ——"

"Stop! Stop!" I suddenly cried out, my hands over my eyes.

There was dead silence in the room except for the whispering of the flames.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Marden," he said at last, humbly.

I put down my hands and looked at him.

"What is it?"

"I had a favor to ask," he apologized further by the inflection of his voice. "Let me explain, please, one thing. In all the ten years of my vagabondage—see how I train my tongue always to the words that are bitter—in all those ten years, that was the one event which relit in my spirit the old fires of my youth and brought back to me some semblance of the far-flung visions I had had. With her, I relit the flame I had thought burned out. For just that little time I walked in places that were not ugly, and heard the music of the dawn, and saw the pale splendor of the stars, and loved the hush of twilight. For just that little time; no more."

His utterance was checked a moment by a

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queer noise in his throat, like a sob cut short with a sneer. It was not good to hear.

"So," he said, forcing himself to more of calmness, "that little time seems to me, in spite of what I am, sacred. It seems holy, just an hour or two between her and me, in our own world. It is sacrosanct. And I came here to ask you not to make it known that she—well, condescended to speech with me. I came to ask you, because I know you realized that morning how close her soul was to mine. For her sake, Mrs. Marden, will you be silent about it?"

Having voiced that amazing statement, that extraordinary request, he was silent, his form erect, his face eagerly entreating, his eyes marvelously like the eyes of a wounded bird.

I tried to shake off the tremendous impression he had made upon me, to resent his visit, his intrusion.

"How did you know who I was, where to find me?" I asked.

"She told me who you were—that morning."

He was still expectant, his manner holding me to the favor asked.

"Why did you think it necessary to ask me this?"

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He answered me directly.

"Because I shall fall into the hands of the police—today, tomorrow, soon, some time."

Like a flash, with intense vividness, I read the furtiveness new in his manner.

"You were in my garden that night!"

"Why, yes," he said easily; "I was."

"And you killed her!" I cried, half-rising from the chair as I accused him. "You killed her!"

He put up a hand in denial.

"No, I didn't," he contradicted, "but I might as well have killed her—so far as what I did was concerned."

There whirled through my mind the idea of calling for the police, of telephoning for them. Suddenly, the spell of his peculiar presence, his resonant speech, was broken. I detested him. I thought of Charlie in the jail, of my own suffering.

"What did you do?" I demanded. "Tell me!"

His figure was no longer tensed by emotion. He stood, easily graceful, almost nonchalant.

"I was in the garden, at the foot of the stairs leading from the veranda, when a man, rushing out to the veranda, saw me. He bounded down the stairs and urged me to

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leave, threatened me if I would not leave, offered me money to go, told me where to meet him, mentioned a large sum. He said there had been trouble. He evidently thought I had seen something. I told him I would meet him, and I went over the wall. That was when Dolby saw me."

"And the man who made you leave!"

My voice was a whine.

I knew what he would say.

"It was this man Corcoran."

"It can't be true! It can't be so!" I said, again in that thin, tremulous whine.

"It is true," he insisted, his voice steady.

I thought I detected in his tone the hint of malice, malice for Charlie.

Then the absurdity of all he had said dawned upon me. He had told me, had swept me out of myself as he described, the sacredness with which he regarded the time he had spent with Marjorie, and yet now he coolly related how he had turned on his heel and left the garden when she had been killed. It occurred to me that he must be crazy.

He read my mind.

"I warned you that I was moral dust," he said in unveiled self-derision. "I didn't know at the time that anything had happened to

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her—to Miss Nesbit. The next morning, when I read it in the newspaper I picked up, I—I did this:" for a second his face was sinister, inexpressibly evil, "I threw the paper away, felt the money in my pocket, and said to myself, 'Oh, what's the use? Let things go.' And I went on, turning my back on the murder, on the fact that I had known her, on everything. I sneered and said, 'Of course, it was not for me, anything that might lift me up. It's the same old hell for me always—always.' And I drove it all out of my mind.—I told you," he repeated, "I was moral dust."

"Then why have you come back?"

"Oh," he spread out his hands, illustrating futility, "I knew the police, for all their stupidity, would find me sometime."

I simply stared at him while I groped for words to deny his fantastic story.

"And," he added, still self-deriding, "you may not believe it, but I don't like the statements in the papers that I committed the murder. I don't, really."

"But the money—you took the money," I went back to that with the belief that it incriminated him dangerously.

I think my real idea was to frighten him away, to make him try to escape the police—

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for Charlie's sake. No matter what I might say to him, at heart I believed him, believed him!

Without answering me at once, he bent down and fumbled with the frayed edge of his right trousers leg. In order to use both hands in what he was doing, he laid the battered derby on the floor. After considerable trouble, he drew from the coarse cloth, the inner stiffening of what had been the cuff of the trousers leg, a wad of paper. He flattened this out. It consisted of four fifty-dollar bills.

"That," he said, "is the money Corcoran gave me."

He smiled wearily, scorning himself.

"What use has a tramp for money?"

Then, quite simply and without even the hint of trying to produce any theatric impression, he stepped closer to the fire and threw the bills into the flames.

He picked up his hat and looked at me, the old pleading in his eyes.

"In spite of all that," he said with tremendous energy, "will you do me the favor, Mrs. Marden? Will you see that there is brought into Corcoran's trial no hint of how she—Miss Nesbit—knew me? I will tell about my having been in the garden."

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"Yes! Yes!" I told him, not knowing very clearly what I said, and having forgotten that I had ever told Mr. Rittenhouse about it. "Yes; but go—go before I call the police."

He got to the door without turning his back to me and went quietly out. His only acknowledgment of what I had said was a long-drawn sigh of relief.

I sat, too stunned to move, trying to go over in my mind the whole astounding scene. I felt physically ill, mentally befogged. But there was something to try me even further.

When I finally started to leave the room to go upstairs, I looked up and saw standing in the doorway a woman. For a moment I did not recognize her. When I did distinguish who she was, my heart sank. I felt like screaming out to her that I did not want to see her, that I wished she would go away. It was Mrs. Susie Mason, the Mrs. Mason who had described me to Mary Calhoun as "the most stupid or the most stupendous woman" in regard to my attitude toward George and Marjorie.

I have never liked her. She wears old lavender, and lives on other people's emotions, and has a tongue like a fang.

She came toward me amid a swirl of ample

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skirts. She moved swiftly, as if to emphasize her enthusiastic delight at seeing me. I sank back into my chair. I haven't the faintest recollection of how I greeted her. All I remember is that once, as I put my hand to my cheeks, it felt like ice.

Scraps and sections of what she said to me recur to my mind now like parts of a conversational crazy-quilt.

"But I knew, my dear, you wouldn't mind seeing me. Any woman, particularly a young woman, is fortunate in having a friend to represent her, as it were, at such a time. . . . So, you see, they're all wondering what's the truth about Ruth Marden. . . .

"Judith Scofil referred to you as 'the astonishing Ruth Marden.' . . . She tried to tell me she had noticed that you behaved peculiarly before this thing happened, drank too much champagne, and stopped speaking to Mabel Turner for no reason on earth! I denied it.

" . . . and it's impossible to find an ideal marriage nowadays. Judith said the secret of happy married life lay in the ability of husband and wife to always make phenomenal escapes from each other. She thinks, you know, she's terribly epigrammatic. . . .

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Of course, I know how awful it is to have one's private affairs paraded before the world. It's like paying the price of a divorce without getting the divorce. . . .

"I said, and I said it in all reverence, it was, perhaps, a good thing that she died, because, if she hadn't died, she would have become a notorious character. . . . Judith said it was tragic, the way beautiful women never seemed to be able to keep from being found out! . . .

"Somebody expressed great admiration because you had hit on the idea of simply 'forgetting' everything you had seen in connection with the whole affair. Lots of them refuse, absolutely refuse, to believe your memory failed you—in spite of everything I've been able to say. . . .

" . . . foolish for not looking more ill than you do. That really surprises me. I had expected to find you a shadow, and here you are, your old beautiful self, save a few lines about your eyes. It surprises me, really. . . . Social popularity is always a boomerang. . . .

"Judith said she had lost faith in this talk about 'nerves.' She said she once complained of an attack of nerves when she was a girl, but,

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when her father threatened to cut off her pin money unless she behaved herself, she recovered quickly. . . .

" . . . your husband. Servants gossip. Anyway, that's the report—that there's been some sort of an estrangement between you and your husband. . . .

" . . . and I said you had always been a great friend of young Corcoran's—purely platonic, my dear, purely. He never did anything but throw away the money old J. W. had made. . . ."

When she had gone, I was frantic. What she had said about my abnormal behavior, and how people thought I was hiding the truth, the intimation that there had been a flirtation between Charlie and myself, the talk of my being estranged from George, the whole picture of myself as the center of gossip and scandal—all that hurt, but it was a distant, numb sort of pain compared to my thoughts of Charlie.

He was guilty. The tramp had brought forward indisputable proof of that—for the tramp had told me the truth. That was what I believed while I considered all that he had said.

It upset me so that, when D R arrived, my lips were blue and my teeth were chattering.

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I asked him to let me go to bed, to put off our work until tomorrow. He consented, but I could see that he knew I had sustained some great shock.

"Isn't there something you want to ask my advice about now?" he asked me over and over.

But I shook my head and told him I only wanted rest. I can not lie to him, and I did not feel equal to telling him all I had learned from the tramp. I was not up to it physically. I felt that, if I tried to talk to him, the exertion of it would result in something serious. I let him go without even analyzing my dream of last night.

And now I am sorry. I have changed my mind about the tramp. He came here to deceive me, to persuade me, through sympathy for him and the dead woman, to keep quiet regarding what I know about them. He did that so as to hide forever any real motive he might have had for rage against her. It seems very plain to me now that, if any jury knew of the real relations that existed between him and her, they would have to consider him as far more probably the murderer than Charlie.

So, again, I hold the real key to the mystery, certainly enough of a key to prevent the con-

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viction of Charlie. They say Charlie's motive was jealousy and anger. I can show that this derelict's motive was precisely the same, that he made his extraordinary visit to me in order to cover up the motive.

Tomorrow I shall tell D R all about it. He will advise me as to whether I shall tell the story to the prosecuting attorney or to Mr. Rittenhouse.

The tramp's story is too absurd for belief.

Ah, Charlie, if you only knew tonight! I shall be able to help you much, so much.

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CHAPTER XXI

BEFORE I could tell the story of yesterday's events to D R today, he related to me a conversation he had last night with the chief of police. Mrs. Mason was right—nobody believes in my having forgotten what I saw. If this story of what Chief Palmer intends to do had come from anybody but D R, I should be terrified. That, perhaps, is one reason why he chose to give me the facts in his own reassuring way.

Mr. Palmer called on him last night and, after much humming and hawing, said he had come to ask his assistance in a most important matter.

"What is it?" D R inquired, realizing at once what it was about.

"Let me explain the thing to you," Palmer prefaced his request. "Right after the murder of the Nesbit woman my case against Corcoran was complete. Everybody said his conviction was a foregone conclusion. I thought so myself. But I'll be honest with you. I'm beginning to lose confidence in it."

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"What's happened?" asked D R.

"Nothing yet," the chief replied. "But look at the thing as it stands. The only real evidence I have is what Mrs. Marden said when she staggered into the library after discovering the body. Even then she didn't mention Corcoran's name. Then I heard what she said to Corcoran the next morning. That is the solitary thing that really fastens the crime on him. But I know Rittenhouse. He'll have a string of specialists and alienists—you, probably, among them—to testify that the words of a woman in such a nervous condition could have no possible value. After that, what's left?"

"Well," D R prompted, "what is left?"

"The rest of it is merely circumstantial, and I'm not strong for circumstantial evidence. Occasionally you get one of these birds on it, but most of the time you fall down, and then the newspapers and the public bawl out the police force."

D R smiled.

"Your idea is that you must send up somebody anyway?"

"That's my duty," agreed Palmer frankly. "I've got to make good on my job."

"Well," D R brought him back to the point, "what help can I give you?"

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"You see," Palmer still delayed his request, "I know what you can do with people who don't want to talk, people who won't testify. You've helped me a lot in the past. You kept me from sending up an innocent man in the Williamson case, and you showed me how to get the right man in the Delphos matter. I've talked this over with the district attorney, and he agrees with me that you're the man to help us out."

"Tell me what it is," D R said without enthusiasm.

"It's about Mrs. Marden," he began. "She denied that interview with Corcoran the very day she had it, and she says flatly she knows nothing about the murder, remembers nothing about it."

"Well?"

D R's tone was in no way responsive.

"What we need, what we must have," Palmer came at last to his demand, "is Mrs. Marden's true story of what she saw in the conservatory that night."

"I don't know what she saw," D R told him coolly.

"But you're treating her, ain't you?"

"I am."

Incredulity appeared in the major's face,

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"And you don't know what she saw?"

"I haven't the least idea," said D R, resenting the man's incredulousness.

"Then," remarked Palmer, "I've got an entirely wrong idea of what psychoanalysis is."

"I tried to explain it to you at the time of the Anderson murder," retorted D R. "It's not my fault if you don't understand it."

"I thought you could get anything out of a person with it," Palmer persisted. "I thought you could make people tell you everything."

"There is no opportunity for compulsion in psychoanalysis."

Palmer shifted uneasily.

"What the district attorney and I want to do," he forced out the words with some difficulty, "is to make Mrs. Marden talk."

"Just—what—do—you—mean?" D R returned with an emphasis which, in some way, was like a slap in the face.

"Oh—er—if you can find out what she knows," he stammered, "and then tell us whether it's worth anything, that will be all right with us. If she knows anything we ought to know, and you can tip us off ——"

D R was doing what was for him a rare

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thing. He was indulging in an access of almost unbridled anger. He kept his keen gaze on the man.

"You see," Palmer floundered on, "you have her confidence. It would be easy for you to persuade her to tell what she knows—to show her that her ——"

"That's enough, Palmer," D R cut him short, his voice like steel.

The chief made another effort.

"It would be for the sake of justice," he said.

"Understand this, Palmer," retorted D R; "I am Mrs. Marden's physician—and you commit the enormity of asking me to spy upon her! Now, I'll tell you this: I'll threaten the welfare of no human mind, imperil the peace of no woman's soul, for any reason."

His voice rang with scorn.

"What you ask is that I play the rôle of a detective and try to trump up evidence about a man who has or has not broken the law. Why, can't you understand? Man, she's my patient!"

The chief of police sprang to his feet, showing the aggressiveness he had felt when he first entered the room.

"You won't do it?" he demanded roughly.

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"Of course, not," D R replied contemptuously.

"Harrow says," Palmer's voice carried a threat, "you could find out all about it with hypnotism; all you've got to do is to hypnotize her and get the whole story. He says what you're doing—well, there's nothing to it."

"Mr. Harrow's opinion of it, or yours either," D R answered that coldly, "has no weight with me. In this case, hypnotism would produce no results. Besides, I am working to bring Mrs. Marden health, peace of mind, happiness. It is, I suppose, something that neither you nor Harrow could be expected to understand."

"All right, Doctor," Palmer went back to his threat. "Don't say, when things come to a show-down, I didn't give her a chance—through you."

D R looked at him searchingly.

"What do you mean?"

"She's going to talk, and talk turkey! There are more ways than one to get the truth out of her."

D R's solicitude for his patient led him to put the question, "What are you going to do?"

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Palmer took his hat from the desk and laughed grimly,

"Doctor," he asked, "have you ever heard of such a thing as arresting a person as an accessory after the fact?"

"You wouldn't do it!" D R defied him.

"Won't I? You wait until the time comes. . . . Doctor Doyle, if Mrs. Marden won't talk, she'll be made to talk. She's got plenty of time to think it over—just about two weeks. By that time, maybe, the arrest won't be necessary."

D R kept down his anger,

"Palmer," he demanded crisply, "how can you make a woman describe a scene which she doesn't remember?"

"I'm not so sure she don't remember," he said bluntly.

"But, if she goes on the stand," persisted D R, "and tells the truth, which is that she remembers nothing about the murder, what then?"

Palmer struck the desk with his fist.

"Doctor, it's up to you. You know that, and I know it. It's up to you, and you can decide whether this arrest is to be made at all."

D R shook his head slowly.

"Don't be unreasonable," he said. "Why,

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Palmer, what a patient says to me is inviolate. Neither you nor any court of law may scrutinize it. I am not at liberty to disclose the secrets that come to me in the confessional of my practice."

Palmer's aggressiveness did not diminish.

"She's your patient and your friend," he returned doggedly. "And it's up to you, Doctor. There's plenty of time for you to decide. I may not understand your methods or your science, but I do know that you have access to the secrets of the people who come to you for help. You can prevent her arrest. It's up to you."

When D R had finished telling me about Palmer's visit, I asked him, "Would he really do it, D R? Would he arrest me?"

"I don't know," he answered slowly. "He might. We must look at these things squarely. Yes; he might. He would do anything that resembled a strengthening of his case against Corcoran."

"And to arrest me as an accessory after the fact—just what is it?"

"It's the charge that you are protecting the accused by not giving evidence in your possession, evidence valuable to the state."

Then I remembered about the tramp, and I

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told him all about it, the conversation, the burning of the money, my belief in him at first, my decision last night that he was guilty and was trying to conceal his having had any motive for the murder.

D R agreed with me in this last supposition—that the tramp had sought, with great cleverness, to insure my silence concerning his connection with Marjorie.

"And yet," I said, "he impressed me at first as being sincere. His manner was so convincing, and he talked so well, so unusually well."

"We are told," said D R with a smile, "that a certain other castaway is rather good at quoting scripture for his own purposes."

"But what am I to do now? What can I do?"

"Do nothing," he advised me, to my great surprise. "You see, Ruth, we have less than two weeks for our work, if it is to produce the results we desire before the trial. The police will find this tramp. You need not feel alarm about his getting away. Your evidence concerning him will be as good the day of the trial as it is now."

"But to keep quiet is merely to prolong Charlie's suspense,"

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"He can stand a little more of it," D R said, with great gentleness. "There is something even bigger than that for you to do now —regain your memory of that night. And you can do it by concentrating your energy on your analysis. Try to let these other things take care of themselves. They will, if you will let them."

Then I told him a dream I had had, and, so absorbing, so detailed and constant, is the thought required by the work, that for the time being I was free from worry. D R was right when he told me weeks ago the work required industry. It does, unlimited industry. The labor of bringing up to consciousness the thousands and thousands of experiences and impressions that have made up one's life is immeasurable, and apparently unending.

When I began to write this evening, I said that, perhaps, D R had told me about his talk with Chief Palmer because he wanted me to hear of the intentions of the police from such a source and in such a way that I would not be terrified. That much is true, of course. But I believe also he thought it would do me good, would benefit our work, if I knew what danger threatened me. He gave me, so to speak, an

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added incentive to *remember*. He did it, whether he intended it or not.

And it is odd that the idea of my facing arrest should not trouble me more than it does. In a way, contemplation of it is altogether horrid. Yet, I believe it will never occur. I am sure, strangely sure, that my memory will come back to me. And my happiness? My love for my husband, and his love for me?

Yes; I am beginning to see that even these things may yet be mine. I can not explain how slowly this first glimmer of real hope has dawned upon me. I can not even tell how very vague and unformed it is, even now. I still walk among shadows, and I can only *feel* the probable coming of the light—just as one walks in a wood before dawn and senses, before seeing, the first gray that changes the dark into a place peopled with immense ghosts, ghosts which later take on the semblance of trees and other natural things.

It is all mixed up, confused, but I hope! That is the great thing. I hope for happiness, just as I hope for the return of my memory in all its completeness.

D R's patient, untiring work and struggle

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with my subconscious and my conscious mind have done me good, however little it may be so far.

I hope—hope vigorously.

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CHAPTER XXII

MY situation is appalling. Today I retain the hope for better things which was with me last night, but that very hope enables me to appreciate with all the more clearness the difficulties that beset me. Running through the pages I have already written, I realize that I have not had at my command language sufficiently vivid or impressive to describe adequately what I have suffered.

This diary has been written, is being written, by a nervous, grief-stricken woman. I have put into it only the hurried high lights that have touched me in the past few weeks. A reading of it carries hardly any idea of the torture I have endured through the long, unpeaceful days and the endless, horror-haunted nights. I have alternated between the mirage of hope and the unplumbed depths of despair, and, necessarily, bitterness has characterized my thoughts, my acts and all my words.

I can not remember that I have said one kind, considerate thing about anybody in all these chapters! That, of itself, is awful proof

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of what my state of mind has been. Only the unutterably sad are immeasurably bitter.

I characterized my situation just now as appalling. It is particularly so because, for the first time, I am face to face with the inexorable truth that, in order to make one's happiness sure and to handle the problems of life with success, one must depend absolutely upon the resources of one's own soul. That sounds trite. It is trite. But how many people, most especially how many women, realize its profound truth? Most of us—and I have been in that number—prefer not to think, not to reason things out. Thinking, after all, is an inconvenient and dangerous thing. It is so apt to hurt our pride if we think honestly!

Therefore, we let others think for us, form our opinions for us, even shape our emotions for us. We do as others do, because it is so easy to run with the herd. And yet, I dare say, nobody has ever yet come very close to the stars by running with the herd. Fortunately, I have been shown how to think. I say "fortunately," although that is still hard for me to say in strict truth. There are so many times, even now, when I am tempted to long for soul indolence, mental lethargy, so as to escape my own responsibilities.

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Had not a great need driven me, I question whether I should ever have scrutinized myself as closely as I have done recently. In truth, I know I should not have done it, but for the agonizing need of it. But D R led me into it, helped me with it—and I believe I am sincere when I say I am thankful for all he has shown me about myself.

As I am situated today, Society, of which I thought so much, is in reality inimical to me, suspicious of me, imputing to me the most unworthy motives. I am, however I may try to deceive myself about it, a person watched by the police, one thought capable of every sort of lying in order to shield a murderer. Charlie, whom I have injured irreparably, is in peril of his life because of me; a derelict of the road skulks, hidden, while he sneers in his confidence that I will not betray the ugly secret of his relations with Marjorie. But that is not all. D R has taught me to see in how many indescribable ways I have fallen short in dealing with the burdens of life. That, of itself, has been enough to make me cry aloud by day and by night.

Finally, I am separated from my husband by a feeling of repugnance which I can not overcome. How he feels toward me, I can not

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tell. How he will feel if I ever am able to go to him in sweetness and love again, I have not the slightest idea.

This morning, still with that faint glow of optimism in my heart, I said in sudden impulsiveness to Mildred, "Find Jeffries, will you? Have him say to my husband that I would like to see him today, this morning."

For a moment, she looked surprised and startled. Before she was out of the room, my mind changed irresistibly. I could not follow out the impulse.

"Never mind," I said with assumed carelessness. "Not now. Some other time will do."

I could not have faced him or talked to him satisfactorily if my life had depended upon it. It is the truth that, to all intents and purposes, there might as well be a granite wall, mountain thick and towering to the skies, between him and me. It is a repugnance from which, as yet, I have been unable to escape. I dare say other women have had the same experience. I can well understand it.

There are two women I have known who remind me of myself today. One was a plain, matter-of-fact person, a milliner, in a little town up on the New England coast. I knew her a year after my marriage, and, while she

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worked for me, I used to talk to her about many different things. Women of that class, I believe, are more outspoken than others concerning their views of life. Perhaps, it is because they have so much more loneliness in their lives, and, therefore, feel the need of self-expression. I remember that she said to me one day:

"There are some wives, I suppose, who know about the infidelity of their husbands, but, because of pride, refuse to admit, even to their husbands, that they do know it."

At the time, that shocked me beyond the power of words to describe. It sounded so like the selling of the body into bondage. It took away from life all its nobility, all its sweetness, even all its decency.

But am I not a little like that woman?

Was not George's refusal to have children as much of an infidelity to me, to my happiness, to my ideals, to the holiness of our union, as was the infidelity of that husband about whom the woman talked to me so naively? And, when I consented to his demand, did I show any more nobility, any more independence, any more decency, than she did? I think not.

Perhaps, what she said horrified me so ter-

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ribly because I unconsciously recognized in myself a danger of doing as she had done. After all, to feel horrified is a means of guarding oneself against doing wrong things. May it not be possible that the strict, cruel code we women have against the sisters who stray from the strait and narrow path is a high barrier, tipped with points of steel, to remind us that we must keep within the inclosure? It may be so. That seems a bitter thing to say, to put down in black and white, but I am through with the soft and easy things, and I do know now that in each of us there is a latent but tremendous possibility for wickedness. We all have need of the high barrier tipped with pointed steel. We must wall ourselves in from evil.

Another woman, a very good friend of mine and the wife of an extremely talented architect, told me a year or two ago:

"John wants to take a house in the country for a year, because Society wears him out, cuts down, he says, the freshness and originality in his work. I've consented to it, of course—what else could I do? But I'm scared to death about it. How will life be worth while out there, with just John?"

Such an attitude as that seemed to me out-

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rageous. I recall how I said to myself: "Why, she's nothing but a parasite woman—taking all, giving nothing."

But what right did I have to recoil from her, to condemn her selfishness? Am I not as much of a parasite as any woman who ever lived? I have produced nothing. I have no children. I have done no work. And I have given George nothing worth while—absolutely nothing. Because I am the wife of a rich man, I have sat at festal boards and covered myself with rich fabrics and wasted my time and energy in entertaining other men, men who now are either on their way to fight the battles of the world or in this country doing the world's work.

I, who should have been to the One Man a princess, have allowed myself to become merely his plaything. I have joined the fool's parade of silks and laces, have made love into a mockery, have lived as a very zany of sentiment, have tried to substitute for the splendors of the soul the ugliness of ease and the looseness of luxury. I have been—I know it too well—a traitor to my destiny. No wonder that self-scorn spurred me on to phantom joys—and no wonder that I came to know the soul-weariness that is back of every tragedy in the world.

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So, I say, my situation is appalling—I feel for myself a contempt which I can not express, and Society condemns me on every side. It would be too appalling, too intolerable, for me to contemplate if I believed it all had happened because of the inscrutable will of a divine providence. People are apt, many of them like, to sit down and say, "This is Fate. It had to happen to me." I refuse to say any such thing. I refuse to believe it of myself or of any unhappy woman.

I know now, I have learned, that there is a cause for everything, and that we who waver and fall in life have had horrible things done to us in our childhood, in those years supposed to be filled only with the things which will bring forth good fruit in the years to come. Christ, whose psychology was invariably irrefutable, knew that figs could not be gathered from thistles. Why do not people know it today? He said it two thousand years ago. Surely, the world has had time to learn its truth.

And, if figs can not be gathered from thistles, how can beautiful lives grow from childhoods that have been made ugly? It is the same thing; it is the inexorable law that the harvest comes from the seed. I think there

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should be a new law written, a fresh commandment, and it should read:

"Honor thy son and thy daughter."

But, although I scorn myself and Society condemns me, I still hope. The hope is, as I said, not so brilliant and dazzling that it comforts me, but it does hold out to me promise of better things. If D R were to cease to help me, I should feel utterly without resource. I should know that I probably would never remember the events of the night of the murder, and that I would never be able to achieve contentment with my husband.

A few days ago I said to D R:

"I know now that I should feel differently toward George, that he has as many things to forgive in me as I have in him. But I can not force myself to go to him. There are times when I think I shall never be able to follow my convictions as to what I should do."

He explained it by saying it is always hard for us to make our deepest feelings follow the behests of high and abstract thoughts. We can think things out when we can not feel them. It is so of all people who are high-strung and neurotic and extremely sensitive to impressions.

For instance, the drunkard knows quite well

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that he should not get drunk; the morphinist knows that she is degrading her intellect and wrecking her good looks with the drug; the gambler, in seeking the absorbing excitement of cards, realizes his folly—but they all go through with it again and again. They are two very different things, to plan and to do, to think and to act. There is within us, as the result of the past years, impulses which drive us blindly unless we stop and analyze them, often analyze them with the help of another.

And there are many examples of repugnance, such as I feel toward George. There have been great neurotics, I mean by that great men who were neurotic, and they have left indisputable evidence of the fears and repugnances that preyed upon them and lessened their ability. Julius Cæsar was so afraid of thunderstorms that, whenever they were raging, he sought refuge in a cellar. Frederick the Great had such a repugnance to water that, whenever he drove across a bridge, he did it with the curtains of his carriage drawn, and in the meanwhile he was bathed in perspiration. Such a list could be carried on almost indefinitely.

They all paid hideous tribute to ugly things that entered into their souls when they were

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young, when they did not clearly understand, and when their parents did not understand them sufficiently to enlighten them. That, too, has the ring of bitterness. But it has also the note of truth. Do I not know it? Have I not paid tribute to my mother's mistakes?

If I did not know this, I should be entirely without consolation, without the hope of comfort. I should resign myself to sorrow and discontent for the rest of my days. I should have to try to satisfy myself miserably with husks—like the woman who accepted her husband's infidelity without comment—like that other woman who contributed nothing of love or helpfulness to her husband.

But I refuse to do that. I know that D R will help me to remember, aid me to right the evil effects of some ugly things that came to me as a child and compelled me to look at life from a distorted angle and with an unworthy purpose.

The cry of my soul is for happiness, worthy happiness, and by that I feel that I shall come at last to peace and shall solve all the problems which confront me, my own self-contempt and the condemnation and accusations of Society.

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CHAPTER XXIII

THIS is the night of the twenty-ninth of November, and there are left only three days in which I may keep up my fight to win back my lost memory—in time to save Charlie. It seems such a brief space in which to accomplish what I desire—such a little bit of time for the working out of this thing that puzzles me and terrifies me by turns.

When we had finished our talk today D R said:

"Do not lose faith. Keep up the magnificent courage you have shown so far. We shall succeed. I am sure of it."

After that, he was silent for a long time before he asked:

"Ruth, if you regained your memory of that night, and if what you remembered incriminated Corcoran beyond all dispute, would you tell the truth—in court?"

It was the first time he had asked me that. It was, also, the first time I had ever thought of it seriously, so confident have I been of

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Charlie's innocence. It staggered me for a moment.

"Yes," I answered him, at last; "I would."

And I would.

I have learned that no one may lightly assume the burden of a lie. I know now that, in the end, what one does in secret one finally shouts aloud from the housetops. That would be true of Charlie, if he were guilty, just as it would of me. The truth, when all is said and done, is the only means by which one may keep one's hands clean. It is as fatal to try to deceive others as it is to deceive oneself.

And yet, I am strangely confident of Charlie's innocence, although the papers today were crowded with statements of his guilt. That was because the police yesterday apprehended the tramp. He gave his name as Dan Riggles, and he told the authorities the same story he related to me—that he had been in the garden the night of the murder, that Charlie rushed from the veranda and offered him a large sum of money to disappear, that he did leave the garden by the way of the wall and later met Charlie at the corner of Seventeenth and I Streets, receiving from him two hundred dollars in bank notes.

Moreover, the police have found that the

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bartender of the club cashed, from the money in the bar's cash register, one of Charlie's checks for two hundred dollars, giving him the money in four fifty-dollar bills.

All that, apparently, has been more than sufficient to convince the police and the press of Charlie's guilt. They have refused to consider the possibility of the guilt of the man Riggles. Such a line of reasoning has not occurred to any of them.

But they will have to value it. D R has agreed with me that I must tell the whole story of the tramp's acquaintance with Marjorie when I go on the stand, most particularly the detailed story of his interview with me when he asked me to keep silent and when he burned the money. That is, if I fail to remember what I saw the night of the murder.

But I shall not fail! On that, I am resolved. I shall make my great desire to remember whip my mental mechanism into greater activity. I refuse to have that night wrapped in darkness and kept from me. I am determined to win back to a clear recollection of it all. I want the fine gold of those forgotten hours—the fine gold with which I shall buy back Charlie's freedom.

And, while I work for it, I am not to be

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molested. D R has obtained from the chief of police his promise that I shall not be arrested until after I have testified, after I have refused to tell what I saw in the conservatory that night. The possibility of arrest has lost all terrors for me. I know I shall not deserve it.

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CHAPTER XXIV

SENTENCES from the newspaper of today, the thirtieth of November:

"Public interest in the trial of Corcoran transcends all bounds. Literally thousands of people are besieging the authorities for cards of admission to the courtroom. In this number are many society women, and it is probably correct to state that there is far more speculation as to what Mrs. George Marden will say on the stand than there is interest in the actual fate of the prisoner. What the beautiful society woman knows about the crime, is so far a mystery. Nobody, with the possible exception of the accused man's attorney, Mr. Rittenhouse, has the least inkling of what her story will be. . . .

"The tramp, Dan Riggles as he calls himself, sticks to his story, although he has been put through several severe grillings by the police. He is now regarded as the star witness against the prisoner. . . .

"Corcoran keeps up his surprising show of

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courage and optimism. Those at the jail who come into daily contact with him declare that he feels sure of acquittal in spite of the overwhelming array of cold facts against him. . . .

"Doctor Francis P. Doyle, this country's best known authority on psychiatry and mental problems, has been interviewed by both the prosecuting attorney and the counsel for the defense. It is understood that his testimony, aside from being a repetition of what he heard Mrs. Marden say in the library of her home the night of the murder, will throw little or no light on the facts of the case. He will state that Mrs. Marden does not, and can not, remember what she witnessed in the conservatory, the actual scene of the crime.

"To combat this, however, the prosecution has called two celebrated alienists to give their opinions as to whether Mrs. Marden's alleged aphasia could have lasted for the brief time she claims it did. . . .

"Chief Palmer continues to predict that Mrs. Marden will give invaluable evidence for the prosecution. . . ."

Instead of being dismayed by this notoriety, I feel within myself a growing strength, a fund of optimism sufficient to enable me to keep up the work of *trying to remember*.

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More and more I am impressed with what I owe to D R. I say somewhere in this diary that he is a famous man, famous in many ways. But what is far more important is his reputation among his fellow men for probity, integrity, right living. I doubt that any other man has ever been so universally looked up to and respected.

I see now that, if this had not been true, I would have been pursued and annoyed to distraction by the police. I know that, but for his standing in the community, Chief Palmer would never have promised to postpone my arrest until the very last moment, *after* my refusal to testify at the trial.

There is nothing more for me to do now except hope and work during the few hours that are left. D R worked with me more than two hours this afternoon. He would have devoted more time to me but for the fact that it is impossible to achieve anything like satisfactory results after that length of time. The human brain can be spurred and urged and hurried only so much. After that, it is like any other human machinery. It succumbs to weariness.

He has decided that the best time for me to tell Mr. Rittenhouse all the details of the

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tramp's coming to see me will be the evening before the trial—Sunday.

"That is," said D R, "if in the meantime you have not remembered."

I see plainly that he is as confident as I of the ultimate result.

I asked him this afternoon, "Why is it that I feel so sure of success? This hopefulness is almost a new thing with me."

"It's because," he answered, "we have gotten rid of nearly all the scars that were on your mind and soul. You have cast aside the weights that were holding you down, the distorted ideas, the wrong judgments, all of them except the one scene of your childhood which definitely gave form to your neurosis. When we come to that, when some dream of yours leads us to where that soul ugliness is hidden in your subconsciousness, our work will be finished."

I understand that. I feel as if the thing we are looking for were just around the corner, and I about to come face to face with it.

And, coupled with that sensation, is my conviction, now full-grown, that Charlie is about to go free.

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CHAPTER XXV

AT last——

At last I remember the events of the night of the murder, and at last I possess my own soul.

I remember—and the day after tomorrow Charlie Corcoran is to take his place in the prisoner's dock before the world, to be tried for his life. The contemplation of that brings upon me humiliation, an incomparable woe. When I think of it, I stand aghast, incapable as yet of deciding what I shall do or say.

I possess my own soul, but it is a trembling, uncertain possession. At one moment I tell myself that I shall allow no outside matters, no outside people, to disturb me. Knowing myself as I do, I am conscious of the urge to withdraw myself from the world, to preserve my own peace of mind.

But to that there succeeds the sweeter, stronger thought that the world must mean more to me than ever before, and that I shall attain to the full possibilities of myself only by living with, and learning to love, all the things

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that are in the world—the cries of sorrow, the cool of the spring rains, the evanescent silver of the moon, the rose petals that carpet the gardens, the golden hands of the dawn, the strains of solemn music, the stifled sobs, the laughter of children, the hum of the city, the voices of the warriors who fill the land—everything.

I, Ruth Marden, am myself again, and through myself I must reach happiness. And to be happy—what is it? Quite plainly, but very far off, as it were, I see the meaning of happiness. It is to wonder like a little child, to find mystery in everything, every day, everywhere, to be surprised continually, to clap one's hands in glee as every brilliant hour flashes past. That is happiness. But, in order to attain to it, I have far to go and much to do.

No woman, I believe, ever faced such an ordeal as that which confronts me here in the night hours. Upon my decision rest the future of the accused man, the happiness of my husband, and the destruction or salvation of myself. Surely, any one will understand why I weep bitter tears and am torn by wonder.

When D R came to me today, I noticed for the first time that he, like myself, labored under

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a nervous strain. Because of his love for me, he has suffered as much as I in our desperate struggle to bring back my memory. And the time had grown so short!

"Did we have a dream last night?" he asked, with that slow, gentle smile which is so completely characteristic of his sweetness of soul.

"Yes; one which I can't make anything of, at all."

Then I told it to him.

"I dreamed that the President of the United States stood in the center of a room. A lark flew toward him, and he smiled at it, but it suddenly turned into a big bird like a vulture, with a funny beak like a pin. Also it was a red-headed bird. It was the funniest thing—her head, instead of being covered by feathers, had on it human hair, red hair. She fought the President, who only smiled as she tore at his face with her beak until the blood came. This made me furious—I had been standing near watching—and I suddenly grasped the vulture, and caught the neck and tore off the wings, killing her."

"Well," he said, pacing to and fro, as he always does when thinking intently, "what does the dream bring up in your mind?"

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"Nothing," I answered. "I've been all over it, and the result is a blank—nothing."

"I am inclined to think this is a big dream. I believe a lot of your childhood is mixed up in it. Try to think—something. Anything?"

I got the idea that he was deeply impressed with what I had told him, that he thought we were about to put our hands on what had been to me, as a child, a tremendous experience. Somehow, I had the same formless idea myself; and it frightened me, awed me.

"I have an impression, some sort of an impression," I answered, absorbed, my voice strangely like that of one who reports to others on the outside progress being made in the exploration of a dark room, "about something that happened at night."

I paused, still striving to rescue something from the domain of my subconsciousness.

"Take the vulture's beak," he suggested. "That was a most unusual beak for a vulture to have, like a pin."

Still, I made no answer.

"Think—does a pin remind you of anything?"

I suddenly sat bolt upright.

"Oh, D R! I believe I remember. It was at night, and there was something about a red-

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headed woman—something my mother said to my father.—Now, I wonder what it was."

He stood still, keyed to the top pitch of mental alertness. He looked like a man on the edge of a great discovery.

"Think," he encouraged me. "What was it?"

"I was standing in the door of a room that was our parlor or living-room. That was so long ago! I must have been only five years old—for the room in the dream is the one that was in our old house, down on K Street, and we moved away from there before I was six."

He waited silently while I groped, seeking the fragments of a mental picture more than twenty years old.

"I was barefooted and I had on my night-gown. I was a little bit of a thing. I remember my mother was quarreling with my father—and, oh! I was sucking my thumb, and I was standing at the door—and they didn't see me. It all comes back now. It's very clear."

"Go on," he instructed me, beginning again to pace the floor.

"I can hear my mother now screaming at my father," I continued, and immediately, struck by a new idea, I exclaimed: "That is

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how my fearful impulse to scream aloud was caused!"

"Of course," he agreed. "And you realize now that there is no reason why you should have such an impulse simply because you heard your mother, an angry woman, do it twenty years ago."

"Oh, yes; I see now."

"What else do you remember?" he brought me back to the story with more than his usual hurry.

"She was screaming at my father and upbraiding him about his attentions to another woman—a red-haired woman. She said he had bought the woman a pin, a gold pin. That's what brought up the scene in my mind, the mention of the pin. And I can see myself now, stamping my foot and being very angry with my mother. I was sorry for my father. I remember I cried when my father, unable to endure her abuse any longer, left the room and the house. I remember I stamped my foot and screamed, 'He's gone out! He's gone out!'"

"That," D R injected quickly, "was what you said that night, the night you came into the library after finding Marjorie's body."

"Oh, did I?"

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He regarded me for a moment.

"Do you remember what you thought when you witnessed this ill-treatment of your father by your mother?"

"Yes; I wanted to strike her. I thought if it was all right for her to fight with him, it was all right for me to fight with her."

"How illuminating that is!" he said swiftly. "How perfectly it accounts for the rebelliousness, the impulse to fight back because of a wrong, real or imaginary—the impulse which has troubled you so.

"Now, I can give you one meaning, the superficial meaning, of the dream. You know enough about dream symbolisms to realize that in all dreams the President, or a governor, or anybody in authority is symbolical of your father—so the President in this dream was in reality your father."

"I see that, of course," I said readily.

"Now, your mother should have been at all times to your father the impersonation of happiness and delight—that is, the lark in the dream. But the night she quarreled with him she became the vulture and made him suffer.

"When the vulture made your father—the President—suffer, you, in your childish anger,

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wanted to punish your mother. Don't you see? Last night, by means of your dream, when you killed the vulture, you carried out the suppressed impulse you had had twenty years ago. In reality, what you did in the dream was to punish your mother."

"How wonderful that is!" I drew in my breath sharply, realizing the unmistakable truth of what he said.

"But the dream means a lot more," he took up the inquiry. "Now, that beak like a pin—there must be something else in your mind about a pin."

I started slightly. I could not tell why, but somewhere, far back in my brain, there sounded the drums of fear. Other important revelations had caused the same effect upon me. It was as if an unpleasant thought heralded its approach, saying, "Prepare to meet me, since you called!"

D R questioned me again.

"What does the pin suggest to you?"

I was silent several moments. He sat down opposite me.

"What was your thought then, Ruth?"

I still was silent.

"Remember, you promised to tell me everything."

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"Well," I complied with a reluctance I could not understand, "a pin—a pin I lost."

"Where? Where did you lose a pin?"

"I suppose," I said, reluctance yet in my voice, "I have lost a great many pins—several gold pins."

"Then," he put in swiftly, "this particular pin was a gold pin?"

"Yes—a gold pin."

"Well, where was it?" he asked, the shadow of insistence in his manner. "Where did you lose it?"

The unpleasant thought had come!

"I lost it the night—the night I found Marjorie in the conservatory," I replied in a low tone.

"So the dream has in it something about Marjorie?"

"I don't think so."

My answer was unconsciously nervous and quick.

"But," he said authoritatively, "it reminded you of the pin you lost that night?"

"Yes," I agreed, strangely monosyllabic.

His questions became more rapid.

"What else did it remind you of—this dream?"

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"People with red hair," I said with nervous spontaneity. "You see, there was a red-headed bird, meaning of course a red-headed woman, in the dream—and my mother had red hair."

"What people with red hair are you thinking about now?"

"Red-haired people generally."

"Marjorie," he pursued the relentless quest, "had red hair."

"No," I argued; "Marjorie didn't. Hers was auburn hair."

"But," he suggested, "to all intents and purposes, red."

"I suppose so," I answered quietly.

He rose and began to pace the floor again.

"Ruth," he asked with rapid utterance, "did you ever think—did you ever wish Marjorie Nesbit dead?" He waved his hand, deprecating the harshness of the idea. "I don't mean that you ever laid a deliberate plan for her death, but did such a fantasy ever cross your mind?"

"No!" I said, astonished.

"Never?"

I reflected, and shivered, thinking for the moment of Charlie.

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"Oh, well," I explained, "if it did, it was just something that flashed through my mind, and I put it away from me."

"Of course," he assented, "but was this fantasy ever strong enough to make you think that you would be glad of her death—that you might not punish anybody who brought it about?"

"Oh, no," I replied instantly.

"If it had been a strong mental picture, this idea that Marjorie's death would benefit you, it would have provided you with a motive for forgetting, forgetting so that you might protect anybody who actually harmed her—or even killed her. Do you see?"

"Very clearly."

"Then think; please. Does this dream of your attacking a red-headed bird—really a red-headed woman who may have been Marjorie—does it bring into your mind anything more about Marjorie?"

"There is nothing more about Marjorie, D R," I said confidently, "absolutely nothing more."

"But there must be," he held me to the subject.

"Oh," I said with a touch of petulance, "I just know that I hated Marjorie because I

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thought George loved her. It was just like a lot of the other ugly ideas I had. Don't you see? Don't you see how my hatred of her was wrapped up in all my life and came out in this dream?"

"I see it quite plainly," he agreed, and paused. "Ruth, are you trying to keep from me anything about that night?"

"No."

"Are you trying to shield anybody by your silence?"

"Shield anybody?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Corcoran, for instance."

"D R, you know I wouldn't keep from you anything that's in my mind."

"But don't you see," he spoke gently but with irresistible persuasiveness, "that, as you punished your mother in the dream, you also punished Marjorie? There are wrapped up in the dream two red-haired women, your mother and Marjorie. Now, think of this: is it, or isn't it, possible that, in attacking Marjorie in the dream, you tacitly endorsed the act of the person who really did punish her—kill her?"

"Of course," I said.

For the moment my mind was utterly blank,

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as if a thousand ideas strove for the mastery of it, and none could prevail.

"What are you thinking about?" he demanded sharply.

"The vulture's beak, like a pin—it was the shape of the pin I lost that night, and it was the shape of Charlie's fingers when he stood there in the library, holding out his hands as if he grasped her neck with his writhing fingers—that idea of choking."

"Think!" he urged. "She was choked to death."

The drums of fear thundered close upon me. The silent spaces of my brain were in an uproar that had no voice.

"Think!" he said again. "The red-haired woman choked to death, the loss of your pin, the shape of your pin, your rushing into the library and saying, as you said twenty years ago, 'He's gone out!' Tell me the first idea that comes to you."

"Oh, Charlie!"

I sprang from my chair and stood erect, facing him. I know panic twisted my face. I know terror was in my eyes.

"Oh-h-h-h!"

It was as if the low moan had been drawn from me by barbed hooks.

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I flung my arms upward, the fingers, each wide from the other, writhing.

He caught my hands and, pulling them down, held them in his own strong grasp. My figure stiffened. I felt frozen, lifeless—and knew that fright flourished in my eyes.

"What is it, Ruth?" his cool, strong voice struck upon my consciousness.

As suddenly as I had risen, I sank back into the chair, taking my hands from his to cover my face.

"Oh-h-h-h!"

I moaned again.

He put his hand on my shoulder and spoke again in the same cool, low voice: "Tell me."

I wrung my hands one against the other, my body swaying from side to side, my head bowed. I did not look up to him.

"How—how did I forget?" I asked, the echo of the tortured moan still in my voice. "How?"

"Tell me," he said inflexibly.

"Why haven't I known all along—all this time?" I reproached myself for my own misery.

"Known what?" he demanded imperiously.

"Oh-h-h-h!" Anguish would not give me up. "Oh-h! Out of my own mouth!"

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He stepped back from me, like one relieved. He thought the battle had been won.

"Say it, Ruth," he told me tenderly.

I rose from the chair and crouched back against my desk. My hands came down slowly and fell limply against the edge of the desk. I cowered there fully a minute, trembling like the stem of a rose that is bent by the wind. I looked at him out of hopeless, dreary eyes.

"You know!" I whispered hoarsely. "I did kill her!"

"*You* killed her!" he exclaimed.

His astonishment was boundless. I realize now that he looked as if, for the first time in all the years he had spent exploring the souls of men and women, he had come upon a hidden thing that swept him off his feet. It was as if, in opening a door to liberate creatures which he wished to go free, there had leaped past him a monster too horrible for him to look at in the light of day.

The drums crashed in my ears. I was being trampled by huge, monstrous spirits and shapes. It was like being whipped by hail, bruised by great winds.

I besought him. "Oh, what made me kill her? Why did I find her that night in the conservatory? Why was it so terribly easy

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for me to go up behind her and put out my hands and crush the life out of her?"

He got control of himself.

"Don't be afraid, Ruth."

He drove his voice to its natural pitch as he forced me into the chair again.

"Don't be afraid at all."

He knelt beside me and put his arm round me.

"I'll tell you why," he said, trying with words to keep me from going more to pieces—which was useless, for horror held me taut and stiff, and dry-eyed. "It is what we've already learned—the sins of the parents upon the children. Every child has a right to have its little life started on the great voyage under purple sail and with jeweled helm. But this was denied you. And there had to come the harvest home of the ugly scene that colored your whole life. That is all. You must not despise yourself. You must not abase yourself, must not surrender to fear."

"But Charlie! Why did I say he did it?"

"That was a twist of your subconscious mind. You had done something too horrible to admit to your real, conscious self. It was in terrific conflict with all your finer instincts and ideals. So, unconsciously, in the wild

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whirl of your thoughts, you grasped at a way of escape. In fact, the way had been prepared, for in your conscious moments you had seen Corcoran go through the pantomime of choking—of doing what you did. Subconsciously you acquitted yourself by transferring the guilt to him. After that—and only after that—could you come back to possession of your faculties. It is a mental mechanism that frequently occurs."

Suddenly I wept. For the first time since the tragedy I shed real tears. The thunderous noise was still in my ears, the unearthly storm still beat me down. I think I cried, just as a child, caught in a hurricane, might lie down on the ground in the mud and shriek with a terror too vast and too nameless for it to understand.

"But you are guilty of nothing," D R's voice came to me indistinctly. "You didn't even know anything about it. You are no more responsible for the death of Marjorie Nesbit—understand me, Ruth—you are no more responsible for it than was your dead mother."

That made no definite impression upon me. I remember that no clear idea remained in my mind. The great noises continued. And across my mind there seemed to sweep huge

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dark clouds, each one ugly with ruin, all of them pressing me down with an immense weight—and I looked at the clouds, finding them confused, benumbing, a moving manuscript of agony so universal and all-enveloping that I could appreciate no one feature, no one phase of it.

My gasping, frightened sobs lifted me up and almost tore me from the circle of his arm.

"What is to become of me?" I moaned at last. "What shall I do?"

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CHAPTER XXVI

BUT he did not tell me what to do. I think he knew that, in reality, I did not want him to tell me.

He went to the fireplace and stood there, silent a long time before he spoke.

"We all are fond of saying we are the masters of our fates. We prate about free will. And yet, how little we know of what we say. For your own sake, for the sake of others, you must appreciate this great truth:

"All of us come into the world endowed with freedom of will, crowned with the glory of doing as we choose. But this free will, this divine independence, may be taken from us, today, yesterday, or tomorrow. Although one may burst upon life with the feet of one's soul leaping for joy and the hands of one's soul overflowing with flowers, ugliness can, and does, put upon the feet the chains of futility, upon the hands the manacles of weakness.

"And this is not the doctrine of blind sub-

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mission to circumstance. It is not to say that we may surrender weakly, refuse to fight for higher things. It is merely the emphasis of our duty—that we must struggle always, forever be on our guard to prevent ourselves from being stripped of strength in the tumultuous business of living rightly."

I felt that he talked to me, not only to fortify my courage, but also to give me time to consider my new situation. I knew as well as he did that, in coming upon that frightful scene between my mother and father, we had unearthed the thing that had distorted my character, wounded my soul.

He said as much.

"You learned the most tragic lesson that can come to childhood: how to hate. And you learned it from your mother, which, of itself, persuaded you that hate must be permissible, since you saw it in one who personified to you all authority. Then, when the love instinct of your adult years was outraged by your jealousy of Marjorie, the wound of your childhood joined forces with the wound of your womanhood. That is all—that simple proposition: That a warped childhood is to contribute in later years to a warped and tragic womanhood."

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He paused. My sobs had ceased, but I said nothing.

"One more thing," he added, as if he tried to soothe with loving speech the pain of my soul: "with love in your heart, you possess the key to all the good things life has to give. I want to tell you a little story which should guide you throughout all the rest of your life.

"It's an old Buddhist story. A robber chief, the wickedest man who ever had lived in the world, had spent eons in hell, and one day he looked up to Buddha in heaven and begged for release. Buddha asked him to think if he could recollect having done one kind or lovely thing in all his life. He thought for a thousand years, and at last remembered that one day, while walking in the forest, he had seen a spider in his path and had neglected to crush out its life.

"'Very well,' said Buddha, and he made the spider spin a web and drop the end of it all the way from heaven into hell, so that the wicked man might climb on it up to heaven. He climbed a great way, but, when he felt the web quiver, he looked down and saw that many other tortured souls were climbing out of hell on the same web. Frightened for himself and

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afraid the web might break and drop him back into hell, he shouted to them to get off—and immediately the thread broke, and he himself fell back into hell.

"That is all you have to remember, Ruth. Love of self is the suicide of the soul. Service, the service of others, is the ladder by which we may climb."

He was silent again. At last, the drums thundered no longer in my ears, and the clouded horror lifted somewhat from my mind.

I looked up to him and met his eyes.

"I suppose," I said, in almost my natural voice, "I shall be arrested."

I was conscious of his ineffable sympathy. It was like the laying on of hands.

"What do you propose to do?" he asked.

I got to my feet quite steadily.

"Leave me by myself, D R," I said in a low voice. "I want to think. I want to make up my own mind about my own actions."

"It is the brave thing to do," he agreed gently.

He took both my hands in his and held them several moments before he went to the door. As he turned the knob, he said, "Call me at my office if you want me this afternoon."

"Thank you, D R," I answered simply.

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"I think just now my business is only with myself."

When he had gone, I sat very still, looking into the fire. I had a sense of feeling very alert, listening, to see whether Mildred would come in. I did not want her to come in. I resented the necessity of even telling her to go away. Then I remembered that this was her afternoon off, and I was immensely relieved. I was greedy of the solitude and quiet. I felt the overwhelming need of communing with myself.

After a long time, I got up and moved to the window. I could see the street, the asphalt almost white in the clear, cold light of the afternoon sun. A young girl on roller skates flashed past my section of vision, and I thought oddly that I had never before noticed how graceful a young girl looks in the wavy, undulating motion of skating.

I thought of George, and all at once I was consumed with longing to be near him, to have him near me. I stood at the window and whispered to myself—things about George, about his kindness to me, about his patience with my whims. I remembered that he liked red roses, that he had once told me the only jewel I should ever wear was a big red rose

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at my breast. No thought of Marjorie or Mrs. Tarone came to me. I had no feeling of resentment toward him—only longing to put my head on his shoulder. That image of myself with my head on his shoulder persisted in my mind. I wanted to fall asleep with my head on his shoulder, his arm around me.

The bell-button was close by. I put out my hand to touch it, to send for him, and I remembered Marjorie.

I know now why a man condemned to the scaffold calmly eats his morning meal on the day of execution. I know now why he neither laughs nor weeps. Neither laughing nor weeping nor protestation will mean anything, or accomplish anything, or change anything. He has come at last face to face with the illimitable cruelty of life. He can do nothing but submit because in the narrow avenues of his brain there live no agents strong enough or tricky enough to cope with tragedy. He is numb because he is at the end of all things.

I felt like that, just. I went back and sat down in front of the fire, and I talked aloud to myself, trying to form some idea of what I had done. I remember I kept saying to myself, sometimes hearing the words, sometimes repeating them entirely mechanically:

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"I killed her. I am very sorry. I killed her out of hate. I am sure I didn't mean to kill her. I killed her. I am sure I didn't mean to kill her."

No tears came to my eyes. No sobs rose to my throat. I wondered why that was. Then I decided that only cowardly natures could devote hours to meaningless tears and empty lamentations. It was the right thing, I told myself, to face what I had done and to decide what I had to do.

On the heels of that, a black, awful, unmitigated remorse descended upon me. There are no words to carry the weight of the sorrow that beat me down, no phrases to convey a picture of how I recoiled from myself, and scourged myself. As with George, so with her, there trooped through my brain memories of pleasant hours we had spent together, years at school, an evening at the theatre, an afternoon at golf. The special point of my suffering was that I had enjoyed so much with her, and finally had killed her—killed her.

I went into my bedroom and walked slowly to the dressing table, where I stood a long time, fingering the various articles on it. My reflection in the mirror looked quite natural. That surprised me in a dull, unimportant way. I

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left the bedroom and went back to the fire. I desperately wanted to view my situation as a whole, to take in all the details of the monstrous catastrophe—George, and Marjorie, and the police.

A picture of prison flashed upon me, and left me undisturbed. For the moment, I accepted it quite as a matter of course that I must suffer, suffer horribly, and give thanks for the suffering.

"But," I said aloud, "I must tell George. He will never love me. Men don't love women who murder and go to prison. Women, if they love, keep on loving their men when they go to prison. A woman has no moral sense where her man is involved. But men are different, different."

After that, I was still for a long, long time. When I roused myself, the room was dark. I stirred the fire, and thought of Charlie. Until then, I think, I had tried not to think of him at all.

I sprang up and ran into the bedroom and threw myself on the bed. I lay there, trembling a little, my wide eyes questioning the dark. How little I was! How little we all are! For weeks I had busied myself in an absurd fashion, thinking highly of myself be-

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cause I was trying to remember the facts about the murder, so that I might help Charlie. I had even gone to the jail and paraded before him my pride in trying to help him out of the trouble to which I had brought him.

And all the time he knew I had killed Marjorie! That is why he said nothing. It is why he was so confident of his own acquittal. It is why he compromised himself so foolishly in giving the tramp the money. Charlie saw me commit the murder. The stupendous nature of his sacrifice, the gorgeous quality of his service to me, made me cry aloud, over and over: "How little I am! How little I am!"

From that, a feeling of unutterable humility came upon me. It is still in my heart. I felt that I could do only the right thing, the just thing, the fair thing. But, if I confessed, what of George?—what of my indescribable longing to possess once more his love?

Instead of answering that, I came back here to my desk and began to write. I have been writing for hours. It is very late, and I am so exhausted that I can hardly hold the pen between my fingers, exhausted emotionally as well as physically. I can not think connectedly. That, I suppose, is well. I do not want to think any more tonight. I am going

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to sleep with the belief that tomorrow I shall awake and follow the path that leads to expiation, it matters not at all how steep or how crowded with thorns it may be. I shall follow it to the end.

Through my window, with its curtains still undrawn, I can look up and see the stars. How far away they are—how far!

And "one star differeth from another star in glory." And one soul differeth from another soul in strength. I wish the world had discovered that long ago. I wish my mother had known it twenty years ago.

I am so tired, and tomorrow I must be so strong!

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CHAPTER XXVII

SLEEP, however, did not come to me. Instead, my mind was busy with two thoughts: I had killed a human being, and I had killed my husband's love. I could not persuade myself that George would ever again love me as he had done in the past. I could not even invent with plausibility to myself any reason why he should love me.

When the dawn came, I could lie still no longer. I went to the window and, throwing back the curtains, watched the changing lights in the eastern sky, watched them until, far up toward the north, there appeared above the horizon a little streamer of brightness that suddenly assumed a coppery, reddish hue. It reminded me of Marjorie's hair, so that I shuddered. I suppose any woman who has done a terrible thing sees the color of her sin everywhere.

At the end of my endurance at last, I resolved to go to George. Up to that moment I had had the idea—if, indeed, I had been capable of any clear idea at all—that I should

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not approach him until after I had in some way done penance. I would put it off, I had thought, until I had confessed my guilt to the prosecuting attorney, so that I might return to George and tell him I had not been afraid to face the consequences.

But now that plan faded. My husband, he alone, had the right to my first confidence. It was his name that I had brought to disgrace. Surely, his was the sorry privilege of advising me as to the course he preferred me to take.

In a moment, clad in a dressing gown, stockings and slippers, with my hair one long braid down my back, I rushed along the hall to his room. At his door, I stopped, suddenly feeling all cold and weak. My wild thoughts took on the guise of a reproach of myself. This was not such a meeting as I should have planned! I would have preferred to have him find me more beautiful than ever before. I should have shown him a great radiance in my eyes, smiles on my lips, an exquisite charm wrapping me about. I should have been dressed in white, with a great red rose at my breast, and ——

All at once I was aware that a thin thread of light came through the keyhole. He was awake, then; out of bed at such an hour!

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Panic drove me to action. I knocked on the door.

With amazing quickness, it was thrown open, a flood of light half-blinded me, and my husband stood before me. Slowly, like one in a trance, I walked past him, into the room. I heard the door click shut before I turned and looked at him. He had on slippers and his favorite, worn old dressing gown. In his left hand was a crook-stemmed pipe from which the smoke curled slowly, and he had the forefinger of his right hand between the pages of a book which he had been reading.

He stood near the door and studied me in amazement for one fleeting moment.

"You look so tired!" he said, in a troubled, perplexed voice, and did not move nearer to me.

"Oh, George," I said, feeling choked and weak, "may I talk to you?"

At that, he hurried forward and rolled a chair to where I stood.

"If you only would," he answered, a little catch in his voice.

I sank into the chair, and he would have touched me, but I kept him away with a gesture.

When I shivered, he seized the tongs with

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the hand that held his pipe and made nervous, ineffective jabs at the smouldering logs.

"I've come to tell you the most awful thing."

I felt the compelling need of warning him, of preparing him to bear the blow.

He went to the table and laid down his book and pipe. Mechanically, he marked his place by putting the pipe between the pages. He seemed extraordinarily moved, and stood waiting for me to speak. He cleared his throat noisily.

"Tell me," he said finally. "Tell me, please, anything."

He drew up a chair and sat down directly facing me. His eyes looked heavy and dull.

"You have a right to know," I temporized, and then burst forth: "George, do you *want* to hear it if it is the most terrible, quite the most terrible, thing in all the world?"

"I want to hear anything you want to tell me," he answered.

I could not tell whether he loved me or was merely sorry for me, he was so grave, so careful in the choice of his words.

"I must tell you!" I exclaimed in a tremulous voice, and at once tried to be calm. "George, I killed Marjorie Nesbit."

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He looked at me while a little frown drew his brows together and his eyes narrowed slightly, as if he studied me and my words with agonizing intentness.

"With my own hands," I added in a whisper.

"You killed her!"

His words came from the back of his throat, metallic, all of the same note, and his lips did not move perceptibly.

I tried to say "yes" and could only nod my head.

He brushed his hand swiftly across his eyes once, and looked at me again with that speculative, puzzled frown.

"Do you know what you're saying?" he asked at last, and I saw that his left hand, which had lain curiously still and loose on his knees, trembled.

"Perfectly—D R knows it, too—I've remembered at last."

He reached a standing posture very slowly and came to my side, his feet uncertain and awkward, like the steps of an automaton.

I felt his hand, very steady now, on my shoulder.

"You poor child," he said in a low, tortured voice. "You poor child. You poor child."

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I tried to speak and couldn't. I think he did too.

Then he came around in front of me, his feet moving with the same stiff awkwardness, and, very deliberately and very slowly, he took me in his arms and sat down in my chair with me on his lap.

"You poor child. Poor Ruth," he kept saying, his fingers stroking my hair in rapid, jerky movements. "Poor Ruth—poor Ruth."

I was afraid to look at him again. I knew that, if I did, I would collapse utterly.

I sat up straight and looked at the fire while I told him the whole story, how D R had at last brought back to me my memory, how I had spent the evening and night making up my mind that I must face the punishment for what I had done and that I must bring the story to him. And from that I went on, in a monotonous, strained voice that sounded entirely foreign to me, how I had wronged him, how I really loved him, how I had loved him all the time, and how I knew that he could no longer love me.

"You couldn't, you see," I concluded, my eyes still averted from his. "I'm not at all the sort of woman you thought I was."

"But I do," he said, patting my hand.

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I turned my head and looked at him, fear and wonder and belief struggling with each other in my mind.

"No matter what you have done or what is done to you, I love you," he pronounced, as if he dealt, unsurprised, with one of the immutable facts of nature.

He seemed oddly constrained. I looked at him wide-eyed, unable as yet to comprehend clearly the significance of what he had told me.

He put his left hand on the back of my neck and his right on my left arm. He leaned toward me a little.

"Might I——" he began; and ended by saying, "Kiss me, heart of my heart."

He kissed me again and again.

"It has been so long—so long," he said huskily.

I lay in his arms, weeping convulsively, my tears so hot that they seemed to burn my face. My feeling was not one of happiness. I wished that he would hurt me, punish me cruelly for all I had made him suffer.

It was a long time—an hour, perhaps—before he forced himself to face the realities that confronted me, that confronted both of us. And he did it in a way that made me feel like

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throwing myself at his feet and begging his forgiveness over and over and over.

"Doctor Doyle spent the night in the house here," he said. "Suppose we call him."

"D R was here, is here now!" I exclaimed.

And I cried again, like a baby, weakly, not trying to check the tears. They were so good to me! Everybody was. D R had kept himself at my very elbow, so as to help me if I needed him.

George rang for Jeffries and sent him to tell D R to come. It was nearly eight o'clock now.

When D R entered the room, he found us in our dressing gowns. George was throwing a fresh log on the fire.

"Ah!" said D R. "I am so glad."

He pressed the hand I had put out toward him. I was still crying.

"Doctor, I want your advice," said George. "We must decide what's to be done. This is Sunday. Corcoran's trial comes up tomorrow."

Something in his tone brought back my composure. As he stood there in front of the fire, his hair disheveled, his dressing gown bagging a little over the belt cord, he had very plainly the bearing of a king.

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"It depends on Ruth," answered D R. "How she feels, what she wishes, how much she can endure—she has been through so very much."

"I want to get it over, D R," I said, "for George's sake and for my own. If necessary, let me make a statement to the judge, or the police, or somebody. Let me give Charlie his freedom, and let me know what my punishment is to be."

At that, George's lips twitched. I think I knew just how he suffered.

"But," objected D R, "can you stand it? Can you go through with it? I can have it all postponed, you know—a statement from me as to your health."

"No! No!" I cried. "Please, *please,* let us face it all."

They talked it over for half an hour and decided to retain Mr. Rittenhouse as my counsel. They would have their breakfast and go to see him at once.

"In the meantime," D R commanded me, "you must be put to bed and made to sleep."

George brought me back to my room, and in a little while D R came in and gave me morphine. He promised that George would wake me as soon as he returned from the con-

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ference with the lawyer, and tell me what decision they had reached.

I went to sleep, with Mildred sitting beside my bed. The last thing I remember saying was:

"I was going to do so much—and now my husband is doing everything."

I was awake before George came back at three this afternoon. His face was lined. He looked as if he had not slept for days and days. But his tenderness to me, his solicitude for me, gave no hint of the tragedy in his soul.

This is what they had decided on:

Nothing was to be done today or tonight. If I made a statement to any of the authorities this evening, there might arise a question of my arrest. They would make the statement to Mr. Harrow, the prosecuting attorney, early tomorrow morning. He could then have an indictment prepared and handed down by the grand jury in time for the case against Charlie to be dismissed and for my trial to begin by eleven o'clock tomorrow.

"There must be a jury trial," Mr. Rittenhouse had given it as his final opinion. "The case involves the matter of her mental condition. Therefore, the judge could not rule on her plea of guilty or not guilty."

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And now, tonight, D R and George and Mr. Rittenhouse, with his law partners, are in consultation, have been for several hours. I do not understand what takes up so much time. D R is to be a witness, and I am to take the stand and tell my story. Surely, nothing else will be required.

The outcome?

For myself, I do not care in the slightest. No punishment that may be meted out to me can compare in kind or in degree with what I have suffered today. I have seen my own husband crucified on the cross of my crime. I have heard him and D R discuss in tense, groping phrases ways and means to save—not my character and good name, for tomorrow that part of me will be exposed to the gibes and mockery of the world—but to save my body from imprisonment.

I have had all that added to my remorse for Marjorie's death, remorse for that, and my incomparable self-contempt because I have learned my own unworthiness. I think, when one recognizes one's unworthiness without excuses and without hypocritical self-comfort, there is no other punishment that can be utterly unbearable.

But George—when I glimpse what he

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faces, in his clubs, among his business associates, in his own heart, in every way, I can neither write nor think. Terror seizes hold of me and shakes me like a reed.

Ruth Marden goes to her punishment tomorrow.

George Marden goes to a punishment which, though not his own, will be more bitter, more intolerable than any criminal's.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

FOR five hours today—two in the morning and three in the afternoon—I sat within the counsel rail in the courtroom while hundreds of people sought morbid amusement in reading my least change of expression and in listening to dissections of my past thoughts and emotions. To the public, I suppose, all murder trials seem monotonously alike. It is only the accused who knows with bitter certainty that each ordeal is a special inferno, and that to have one's privacy torn completely from one is, in a sense, even more horrible than to be tried for one's life.

Facts and opinions are written into a record which can never be blotted out. Whatever punishment may be dealt out to one, one finds oneself, at the end of the trial, with a feeling of having suffered an irremediable thing. It is an emotion like that of the man who is publicly flogged. It can not be defined in words, but it is woefully clear to the one who has endured it. One feels ashamed, as if half-naked. One realizes that one has done some-

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thing which has taken away one's right to say to the public, "Do not come too near; there are secrets in my soul which you may not read."

To a woman, there could come no more humiliating sensation than this. To be pilloried physically is terrible. To have one's emotions painted on the drab atmosphere of a courtroom and to know that the mob ridicules the picture, is even more terrible.

From the moment I stepped into the automobile this morning with George and a policeman in plain clothes—I could see the bright metal star on his vest—until the trial ended, I maintained my composure. This was not because I was brave. It was because I had come to a keen realization of the fact that neither tears nor bravado could affect the inevitable, logical result. I was like one who, having been tortured to the limit of endurance, feels toward the future a cold contempt, a false stoicism.

As I sat in the courtroom beside George, with Mr. Rittenhouse in front of me and Charlie a few seats away, I did not consciously look at anybody, and yet I was aware that Mrs. Mason was in the crowd on my right, and that in the room were a great many other women who knew me—women, in fact, at whose tables

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I had dined, women who had always been glad of invitations to my home. And I was distressed by the ever-recurrent wish that everybody there had been a complete stranger to me.

I perceive it must be so in any great affliction—this painful conviction that, after all, there are so few friends who are capable of the holy rites of friendship.

The swift formality of the prosecuting attorney's withdrawing the case against Charlie and having him discharged from custody, as had been agreed with the judge beforehand, was followed by my being put on trial. As it developed that I, not Charlie, was the accused, there was in the crowd back of me and around me a subdued commotion, a shuffling of feet, a rustling of skirts, a sibilance of sharp, low whispering. It affected me like a material thing, something which pressed upon me and made me feel the need of added strength.

By agreement between Mr. Harrow and Mr. Rittenhouse, I was called to the stand as soon as the jury had been impaneled—an hour had been given up to that work, during which I had sat motionless, my glance toward the floor, my body stilled by strange inertia.

While I testified against myself, I was aware of only two things, the faces of Harrow and

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Rittenhouse. They seemed abnormally large, and they loomed before me, attracting my gaze irresistibly. The rest of the people were only blurs.

When I spoke, my voice was very weak. It had a thin, faded effect, and it was only by the greatest muscular effort that I could keep it to anything like an audible pitch.

I can not recall all I said. I do remember saying this:

"That is true, I killed her. . . .

"I was jealous of her—had been jealous of her for a good many months—about my husband. . . .

"No; I had no real foundation for it. . . .

"When my memory did return, the whole scene came back to me. I had gone into the conservatory without any idea of finding her. But, when I saw her sitting there with her back to me, I was seized by the blind, irresistible desire to be rid of her, to—to kill her. I grasped her throat before she knew I was anywhere near. . . .

"Yes. I choked her to death. . . .

"I remembered it only the night before last. . . .

"No; I never had any idea of trying to conceal it. . . ."

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Charlie followed me on the stand. D R and Mr. Rittenhouse had seen him earlier in the morning and persuaded him I wanted him to tell what he knew. He did it with great reluctance, and his story was drawn from him practically in monosyllables by the many questions of Mr. Harrow.

From the veranda, he had seen me in the conservatory, and, realizing that something serious had happened, had rushed in and asked me what I had done, and I had told him I had killed her. It was then that he remembered having seen the tramp Riggles, and, hoping to shut up the affair and not believing Marjorie was dead, he had first gotten rid of Riggles. It had not occurred to him, he said, that his action was a covering up of evidence that the State should have had.

After that, came the recess—so that the justice machine might lunch. George was permitted to be with me in a little room, or cell, in the basement of the building. Neither he nor I talked. I think we both had the idea that we must conserve our strength. Only once he asked me how I felt, and I assured him that I felt certain of myself, of my endurance.

The afternoon was given up to the testimony,

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of D R and two other sanity experts. My fate hinged on whether I was insane at the time of the murder and whether I was sane now. The fact, that is the establishment of my having committed the crime, was proved, unquestioned. It remained only to say whether I had been responsible in a legal sense for the act when it was done.

In giving his opinion in my favor, D R talked continuously for forty minutes. What he said was a repetition of what he had taught me during the weeks of my analysis. To me, it seemed neither novel nor particularly striking, but it made such a sensation that reporters got verbatim copies of it, stating that their papers would print it tomorrow as a distinct contribution to medico-legal science.

Before he had finished explaining how I had been totally irresponsible and how many people's acts are the results of what has happened to them in childhood, two of the jurors were in tears.

Doctor Donald, the alienist from New York, testified to nothing that contradicted D R's claim of my irresponsibility, nor did the other, Doctor Richards.

Although what D R had said had made no

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special impression upon me, I was sure, when he finished, that I would be acquitted. I think everybody in the courtroom felt the same way. It was in the atmosphere. It is curious how one feels at times the force of others' thoughts. I felt that as plainly as if it had been written on the wall in front of me.

When the acquittal actually did come, following the very brief speeches of the lawyers, I was not surprised. I felt no strong emotion one way or the other. And, for some reason, the spectators evinced neither disapproval nor emphatic pleasure. As I made my way with George through a side door, there was almost complete silence about me. I had the odd sense that the people kept their seats so as to lose no possible sight of me before I disappeared through the doorway, or that pathos still gripped them.

I have tried to set down here everything I remember about the trial. I believe I have done that. To the person on trial, I think there comes no opportunity for sensing the dramatic and the important in what happens—things rush upon the mind like clouds, vague, confusing; nothing is clear-cut. The accused, the guilty, is overwhelmed by a sense of smallness, of futility. To be a prisoner is to realize

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that the strength of organized society is irresistible when it is set in motion.

I had that feeling. I knew that all I could do was to sit still and let the machinery go on. To me, details were valueless for the time being.

But what I do remember I write down here because I know now that every detail of my experience—and only that which impresses itself on the mind *is* experience—in connection with the tragedy of Marjorie's death must some day be of tremendous value to me. I know that I shall return to all the details, and that I must learn useful things from them. I can not do it immediately. I seem now to have exhausted my strength, my capacity for estimating anything.

But later I must reshape my life, and my sufferings must be taken and molded by me into the very foundation of the structure.

George is sitting beside me as I write this. Of his emotions, of his undeserved punishment, I have not had the courage to write. Perhaps it is as well—for, out of his suffering, he has fashioned already a new and more glorious nobility for himself. The Greathearts of the world are like that. And what can I say?

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CHAPTER XXIX

SINCE my trial, two months have passed. During this time, I believe, I have learned the two great lessons which I had to learn before life could mean anything to me at all. One of these is that, no matter what people have been saying to the contrary for centuries, one may take one's embittered, crippled past and so regard it and so study it as to draw from it useful and beneficent teachings. Even a woman, toward whose past the world is always revengeful, can do that.

The other is that, if one has outraged another's love, one may revivify it, may make it more glorious, through that generous, incessant, whole-hearted labor of love about which D R talked to me during his analysis of me. Indeed, one may reglorify one's own capacity for loving at the same time that one makes oneself more lovable to another.

To any individual who has taken a human life, suffering pays visits that are frequent, visits that are long. The only possible way to rise above that suffering, or to prevent one's

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self-reproaches from reducing one to abject terror, is to determine that, for the future, one will be superior to adverse circumstance and that the business of expiation admits of neither purposeless lamentation nor consciousness of permanent defeat. And one may do that only through an unchanging, I might almost say a fierce, desire to make oneself worthy of love, of somebody's love.

To all of this, George has helped me with a devotion which I can not describe, a devotion, in fact, so unswerving and so perfect that I can not find the words even to intimate its sweetness and its unfailing strength.

Two days after my acquittal he brought me down here to the mountains of North Carolina. We have a little house on the edge of Asheville. The place is indescribably lovely and healing—here one, by the mere act of breathing the clear, clean air and by watching the loveliness of the mountains and the sunshine, is given new vigor for the tired body, a mysterious balm for the tired spirit.

At first, I was weary, almost apathetic, I had been through such an awful strain. D R is amazed to this day that I did not collapse physically. But, in a little while, strength came back to me, and I could study all the

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things that had affected me and would affect me.

I know now that, for a few years at least, I can not resume my old place in the world. The very idea of my going back to Washington now and trying to take up the round of my former duties and occupations is grotesque. It would be no less grotesque to others if I tried it. My very appearance there would be the signal for flurries, doubts, open antagonisms, on the part of those women who, such a short time ago, were my acquaintances and friends. People do not "receive" one who has killed a human being.

I understand that perfectly. I think I am glad of it. My present business is with my husband and myself. Later on—in several years, perhaps—I shall go back and receive, and be received by, the people who really count. Men and women, as a rule, forget easily; and when one, even if one has offended horribly, makes reparation in one's daily life, one finally is accorded forgiveness, forgiveness in some degree or other, through the innate kindness of humanity. However, that lies in the rather distant future, and I shall not worry about it now.

Today I am breathless with gratitude as I

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contemplate the fact that George loves me and is boyishly happy in his realization that I love him as I do. That he does love me, proves forever the truth of what D R told me: a neurotic woman builds up tragedy for herself out of trifles. And how, in my discontented, unreasonable, fevered moods, I did exaggerate trifles into real griefs, these two months have shown me with unmistakable clearness.

Most important of all, there are to be children. At first, I recoiled from that, thinking that a woman disgraced as I was by my trial and by my crime, had no right to bring into the world others who might share, in some sense, the results of her offences. But, contradicting that, came my firm conviction that, because I had failed in one respect, was no excuse for my failing to carry out the highest duty possible for any woman.

Besides, it is only by having children that I may make amends for what I did and what was done to me. There is only one way in which I can prevent my ignominy from doing me good. That would be by failing to take advantage of the lessons it has taught me. I know how little children, the men and women of tomorrow, may be made inefficient, unhappy, wretchedly inadequate. By the same

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token, I think I know how love and understanding, beautiful ideals and lovely purposes, must inevitably guide them from an untroubled childhood into careers of usefulness and content.

From my mother's mistakes as well as from my own, there has come to me—I will not say wisdom—but sufficient appreciation and knowledge to keep the fetters and manacles from " the feet of their souls and the hands of their souls." Surely, if I succeed in that, my mistakes and offences will not have been in vain. I will have justified my right to live, my right to expect for the rest of my days a great peace and a holy happiness.

All this reminds me of what Charlie Corcoran said when I saw him the day before George and I left Washington.

I had sent for him so that I might thank him for what he had done for me. When he came into the room, I knew that it was as impossible for me to find expression for my gratitude as it would be now for me to describe in words the majesty of these mountains or the golden glory of these sunsets. Magnificent actions are like flowers. Although they may flood the world with sweetness and charm a million eyes with their loveliness, they defy adequate

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description, elude the compass of language altogether.

"I can't tell you," I said brokenly. "I can't say —— Oh, there is nothing to express ——"

Then I stood up in front of him while two tears gathered in my eyes and ran down my cheeks.

He seemed greatly confused.

"Good Lord, Ruth!" he begged. "Don't cry. There's nothing to cry about—really."

I uttered a little whimpering moan.

"Thanks ——" I began, and finally said: "You understand how lovely I know it was in you to ——"

He became very serious.

"Listen, Ruth. This is the last time this will ever be mentioned between us. I did you a favor, you seem to think. Well and good. You, you know, you saved me from the Gilmore woman. So we're quits."

He turned toward the table and lit a cigarette.

"I just wanted to say this," he told me in a curious, hurried voice, "I came here to say it: you are the bravest woman I ever knew. You, more than anybody I ever knew, have the right to years of happiness, wonderful happiness. You've earned it. You've undone your own

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mistakes and the mistakes of others through your courage, your stupendous courage. By comparison, what I did was nothing."

He laughed lightly, as if he sought to hide an embarrassment he had caused himself by his unwonted solemnity.

After that, he talked about other things, the plans for my trip, his own plans for entering the aviation corps.

Since then, I have liked to think that what he said was true: that I really "have the right to years of wonderful happiness."

And the words of D R, which gave me my first comfort when we were working to regain my lost memory, come back to me:

"I do not find it hard to believe that Benedict Arnold was a traitor because in his childhood he heard, through some half-open door, his father saying strange, ugly things for money—or that Judas bartered away his soul because, as a little boy, he saw his own mother sell her scarlet lips for gold."

Surely, such knowledge as that, a knowledge written on the tablets of my soul by my own experience, will enable me to find within myself a great love for all people, an inexhaustible forbearance, unsuspected sweetness of character, and an unalterable conviction that

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everybody deserves, in some way or another, the love and compassion of the world.

To the casual observer, my life seems ruined, blasted beyond all hope. But to me, as long as I am capable of loving and as long as I have the love of even one person, it seems chastened, purified, endowed with even greater opportunities, more gorgeous duties, than I, a little while ago, thought humanly possible.

The future?

It is full of my husband's content. It has in it already the music of children's happy laughter. It is a field in which I shall find many flowers blooming—flowers for others as well as for myself.

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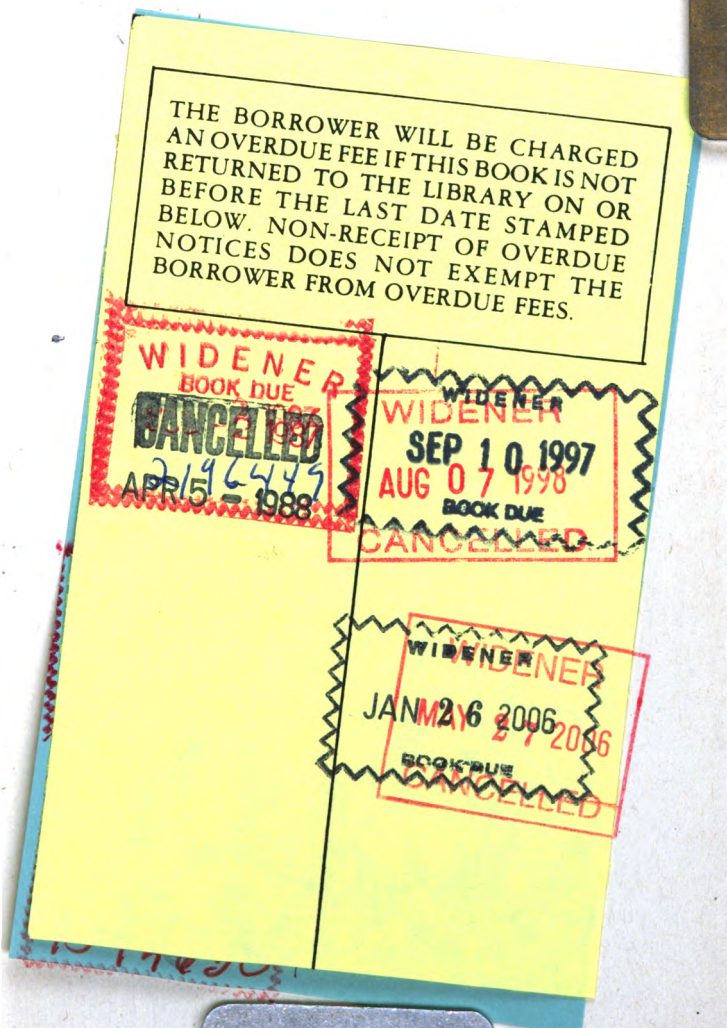
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